Medieval Bhakti Movements in India

Śrī Caitanya Quincentenary Commemoration Volume

Edited by
N.N. Bhattacharyya

Although some aspects of the medieval bhakti movements are known or have been viewed by the historians from their own angles of vision, much remains to be known, understood and interpreted. The present volume, issued on the occasion of the Quincentenary of Mahaprabhu Śrī Caitanya, is an attempt to understand a little more of the medieval bhakti movements of India. The contributors to the volume who have enthusiastically agreed to participate in this project are all specialists in their own fields and their valuable papers are expected to throw new light on many hitherto unknown or known features of the great historical movement, the far-reaching consequences of which are very much lively in the heart of the Indian masses even today. The contributors to this volume are Bimanbehari Majumdar, Niharranjan Ray, G.S. Chhabra, Manorama Kohli, G.V. Saroja, J.C. Jain, M.S. Ahluwalia, H.A. Qureshi, Manjula Bhattacharyya, Uma S. Deshpande, P.S. Mukharya, B.D. Gupta, Hafiz Md. Tahir Ali, N. Jagadeesan, R. Champakalakshmi, S.K. Pathak, N. Subrahmanian, R. Meena, K.K. Kusuman, N.H. Kulkarnee, Prabhat Mukherjee, S.N. Sharma, Sarat Chandra Goswami, S. Dutta, N.N. Acharya, Bhaskar Chatterjee, Neal Delmonico, Sachin Majumdar, David Kopf and Pranabananda Jash. A detailed bibliography containing list of books and articles used by the contributors in preparing their papers and also other works pertaining to the *bhakti* concept has also been supplied. This handy volume has been edited by N.N. Bhattacharyya with an informative introduction.

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Medieval Bhakti Movements in India

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Foreword

It is owing to the grace of Mahāprabhu Śrī Caitanya that we have been able to bring out the present volume on the occasion of his quincentenary commemoration in our humble capacity. We express our sincere gratitude to the scholars—all eminent in their own fields—who contributed their learned articles to this volume at our request, to the editor who devoted all his time and energy to make the project a grand success, to Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, New Delhi who came forward to publish the work on our behalf and to those who helped us in many ways. At the same time we place on record our deep sorrow at the death of two of the contributors—Prof. Prabhat Mukherjee of Bhuvaneswar and Prof. Sarat Chandra Goswami of Guwahati—and our appreciation of the services rendered by them to the cause of this volume.

March, 1989

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Introduction

N.N. BHATTACHARYYA

Hinduism, the term by which all the varied forms of Indian religious ideas, beliefs, customs, cults and rituals are denoted, may be compared to a strange river, constituted by numerous tributaries coming from different sources, which in the course of its flow has created many affluents branching out in different directions towards different goals. But in the vast span of time and space the flow of the individual or combined streams could not have always been smooth. It had the possibility of getting arrested, stagnant or muddy. In fact, the effort to maintain the flow in motion through the ages by enthusiastic individuals had also been a basic feature of Hinduism. Not all of them were well known; there were many whose fame did not even transgress the boundaries of their own districts. But there were some outstanding religious personalities whose fame spread far and wide. Śrī Caitanya (AD 1485-1533) was one of them whose activities made him a legend during his own life-time.

In order to make a reasonable assessment of Śrī Caitanya's contribution to the cause of the spiritual welfare of mankind it is necessary to understand on the one hand some major aspects of Indian religious tradition of which he was a part and, on the other, the nature of the thought-waves of his own age by which he was influenced. It should be emphasised here that in the Indian tradition there is no special term for religion, though at present the word *dharma* is widely used. Etymologically *dharma* means the nature of things, that which sustains and upholds, the guiding principle by which the universe is in order. In the Vedic and Brahmanical texts, the word *dharma* simply denotes law, more specifically the laws of individual and social behaviour. In Buddhism *dharma* means the elements and also qualities of elements by which things are fashioned. In Jainism *dharma* means the principle of motion, the kinetic energy which causes things to function.

Instead of a well-defined religion, the Indian tradition insists on *trivarga* or three aims of life which should be followed by all human beings. It consists of *kāma* or passion and desire to survive and propagate, *artha* or the economic quest for earning a livelihood for the sake of survival and *dharma* or the accepted codes regulating human life which should be followed for the sake of social behaviour and upliftment. There is also a fourth *varga* or aim which is *mokṣa* or liberation, by which is generally understood freedom from worldly bondage or from such fetters as are supposed to cause hindrance to the attainment of perfection. But this aim of liberation is not meant for all. It is only for the *mumukṣu* or those who desire to have it. There are numerous ways or *mārgas* for the attainment of *mokṣa*, each of which is regarded as valid by its followers. In fact it is hoped that an individual should choose his own *mārga* which suits his or her own temperament, mental inclination and cultural standard.

This approach is fundamentally different from the western or Semitic concept of religion which comprises: (*i*) unconditional belief in the existence of a Supreme Being, conceived as a personal God, the creator and controller of the universe, to be propitiated by offerings and prayers; (*ii*) belief in the creed sanctioned by unchallengeable scriptures which justify the existence of the Supreme Being, prescribe a distinct mode of social and ethical life for the followers and the converts and enable them to form a community of brethren under some organisation, the authority of which can be ignored only at the risk of being a renegade or excommunicated; and (*iii*) acceptance of the authority of priesthood or leaders of the creed whose interpretation of the sacred texts and injunctions in regard to social and group behaviour in different walks of life must be regarded as final.

If one takes into account the three major early thought-complexes of India, namely, Brahmanism, Buddhism and Jainism, one should not fail to observe that the concept of a supreme God, which is the most essential ingredient of any form of religion, has nothing to do with all these systems. The theoretical aspects of Brahmanism have been revealed in its six philosophical systems which are known as the Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Pūrva-mīmāṃsā, Vedānta, Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika. Among these systems Yoga is the science of disciplining of body and mind. Its theoretical aspects are based on the Sāṅkhya. But while the Sāṅkhya rejects the concept of God as a subjective error the Yoga accepts it as a matter of fact without however providing any reason. Although many later theistic schools have based their doctrines on Vedānta, the concept of God is anomalous in this system. The Vedānta, according to Śaṅkara's interpretation, basically holds that a world of imperfection cannot be produced from a perfect being since both the concepts are contradictory. *Brahman*, by which term the only existent reality without a second is described in the Vedānta, can therefore have nothing to do with the world which can neither be its transformation (*pariṇāma*) nor its transfiguration (*vivarta*). So the world must be an illusion, an unreal entity, as false as the beauty of the daughter of a barren woman, because owing to its material and finite existence it cannot be the effect of what is only existent as pure consciousness. So the concept of *brahman*, according to Śaṅkara's version, has nothing to do with that of God, creating and controlling the universe.

It is only the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school which attempts to justify the concept of God with reason by postulating that the atoms by which the world is fashioned require an intelligent principle to be moulded and shaped by it in the form of effect. Just as a potter as the efficient cause makes pot from the unintelligent material cause, namely, clay, so also God, as a macrocosmic potter fashions the world from the unintelligent atoms. But this view was challenged by the Mīmāṃsakas, Buddhists, Jains and others on the ground that under such a process of argument God can only be regarded as an agent under bondage. Like the potter he requires body, will and capacity to create. Moreover, like the potter he has also to work with a given material which is atom. They argue that if God is regarded as a free agent he cannot have the desire to create and if he is regarded as an agent under bondage he cannot have the capacity to create. The Sāṅkhyas hold that the existence of God cannot be proved by three sources of valid knowledge, namely, perception, inference and testimony. The same is also the view of the Buddhists and Jains. The Mīmāṃsakas ridicule the concept of God, although they believe in the efficacy of Vedic rituals.

It appears that the doctrine of *karma* and rebirth which is fundamental to Brahmanism, Buddhism and Jainism had something to do with this pronounced anti-theism of the elitists. At the base of the doctrine of *karma* and rebirth the guiding principle was probably the simple agricultural maxim: as you sow, so you reap. An individual's present life is conditioned by his or her deeds of the past life, and the deeds of the present life will determine the course of his or her future life. In this cycle of rebirth, caused and conditioned by *karma*, God has nothing to do. Too much emphasis upon *karma* and rebirth has naturally made the position of the God redundant. Any concept of God implies that by prayer and propitiation he will be pleased and bestow his grace upon the devotees by forgiving their offences and guilts. But here God has given no right to exercise his power to remove the *karma*-fetters by which the life of an individual is characterised.

Apart from the doctrine of *karma* and rebirth, it may also be said that in the Vedic and Brahmanical tradition emphasis was laid upon the association and identification of the human faculties with those of nature, often upon seeking the source of unity behind all diversities, and from this sense of enquiry came into existence numerous beliefs and rituals of varying degrees. As each school of thought faced the confusing multiplicity of nature and sought to master it symbolically by reducing it to order in its own way, the questions thus raised became highly controversial. They became subjects of academic interest among the intelligentsia, but had no impact on the masses. On the other hand Buddhism and Jainism were basically concerned with *duhkha* or suffering and its extinction. Both these systems insist on the inner faculties of human being, the disciplining of the body, mind and intellect.

But there was other side of the shield, based on Lokāyata or popular sentiments in which the idea of an all-powerful Supreme Being capable of bestowing grace on the devotees is found. Instead of raising questions concerning the origin, inner nature and purpose of the universe or erecting a framework of concepts and relations in satisfaction of some emotional or intellectual drive, the concept of an all-powerful personal God controlling everything of the world was put forward. This recalls the features of the Western or Semitic concept of Religion outlined above. The ingredients of this concept may be traced to the pre-Vedic conditions which remained as a suppressed sentiment of the masses. The influence of early Judaism and primitive Christianity cannot also be ignored. The earliest expression of such a concept is found in the *Bhagavadgītā* which says that complete devotion and absolute surrender to the will of God is the only goal of life. Needless to say that such an idea became popular among the masses as a result of which numerous cults insisting on the absolute devotion to a personal God bestowing grace and ignoring human frailties and blemishes came into existence which eventually culminated into the more popular cults of Viṣṇu, Śiva, Śakti, etc. Behind such a conception popular sentiment seeking consolation in the wonder working power of the superhuman entity was a driving force. The influence of local and tribal deities, either identified with the Supreme Being or regarded as its incarnation or regional form, was also by no means insignificant.

The concept of absolutism in politics and society might have some bearing on the development of monotheistic ideas in the sphere of religion, but in reality, belief in one personal all powerful God capable to bestow grace (*prasāda*) is a feature of human psychology. This sentiment was not encouraged by the upholders of the Vedic or Brahmanical tradition, and the earlier *bhakti*-oriented religious systems like Vaiṣṇavism or Śaivism were regarded as Vedabāhya or belonging outside the pale of Vedism. But the concept of *bhakti* or devotion to a personal god became so popular among the masses that eventually this sentiment had to be given recognition. Even the systems like Buddhism and Jainism, which insisted more on the moral and mental aspects, felt it necessary to give their systems a theistic turn. The founders of these systems had been elevated to the level of the Supreme Being and became objects of extensive cults in images. However, it was not until the third century BC that Vaiṣṇavism as a distinguished religious system could become popular. Śaivism got prominence in a somewhat later date.

It is against this background that one has to understand the historical processes through which the development of Hinduism in its modern sense has taken place from the Gupta period onwards. In the shaping of the mass-adaptability of heterogeneous religious elements the importance of the Purāṇas is most significant. The Puranic legends pertaining to different cults and sects, which were by nature very interesting and instructive had a great appeal to the masses. Various ideals, wonderfully blended with entertaining episodes, thus preached through the Purāṇas had prepared the substratum of what is known as popular Hinduism. The basic ground on which most of the Indian systems could meet comprised the concept of suffering and liberation, worldly fetters, the doctrine of *karma* and rebirth, recognition of all accepted cults belonging to the people of various cultural level, insistence on *bhakti* or devotion to the personal God (*iṣṭadevatā*), efficacy of image and temple worship and the way of life upheld by the *Smṛti* texts. Since most of the religious systems subscribed to all these points, Buddhism and Jainism being no exception, there was no difficulty in the development of that catholicity and spirit of toleration by which Hinduism still stands unique.

The concept of a non-formal and personal approach towards the divine was not a new one. It lay at the root of all theistic systems. But this non-formal approach was later replaced by an elaborate growth of institutionalism, organised priesthood, rigid codification and sectarianism. But such overgrowths did not bother the people at large to whom visit to temples, performance of rites, offering fee for worship, pilgrimage and other allied religious duties were routine works believed to earn some spiritual dividend. But a revival of the concept of pure *bhakti* in the form of experience of the Supreme Being of any sect or cult as one of inexpressible happiness and ineffable radiance, waveless equipoise, absolute peace and tranquillity, and of absolute non-duality or complete unity was brought by the Śaiva Nāyanmārs and the Vaiṣṇava Āḷvārs (fifth to ninth century AD) of South India, the God-intoxicated people who transmitted their divine infatuation to millions of their contemporaries through their devotional songs. It was apparently because of the Nāyanmārs and the Āḷvārs that their successors, the celebrated Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas of the South were able to add new dimension to the *bhakti* movements.

Though the concept of *bhakti* eventually replaced the older ideas pertaining to spiritual quests, a purely non-formal approach was not encouraged, and there were attempts to channelise the flow of *bhakti* within different theoretical structures. These theoretical structures were formulated in accordance with a theistic interpretation of the Vedānta. *Brahman*, the ultimate reality of the Vedānta was equated with the Supreme Being of various sects and there were attempts to seek relation between the *brahman* and the world or worldly beings. *Bhakti* came to be regarded as the connecting link between *brahman* (Viṣṇu, Śiva or any deity conceived as the Supreme Being of any creed) and the *jiva* or individual.

A special form of Śaivism flourished in the Kashmir region from about the ninth century AD. The exponents of Kashmir Śaivism such as Vasugupta, Somānanda, Abhinavagupta, Kṣemarāja, etc. were reputed names in the tantric tradition. Kashmir Śaivism does not believe in the authority of the Vedas nor does it believe in the established views on the caste system. The ultimate reality in

Kashmir Śaivism is Śiva who is the self of all beings. He is both immanent and transcendent, material as well as the efficient cause of the world. The creation theory is known as Abhāsavāda, a view which holds that the universe consists of appearance which are all real in the sense that they are aspects of ultimate reality. Just as the reflection of things in a mirror does not create any stain on the mirror itself, so also the universe as his reflection does not stain him. The manifestation of the universe is effected through the Śakti of Śiva which is not different from him. The important modes of this Śakti are *cit* (intelligence), *ānanda* (bliss), *icchā* (will), *jñāna* (knowledge) and *kriyā* (action). The realisation of identity with Śiva is the way to become free from worldly fetters. There is no need of ceremonial worship, disciplinary practices and rituals.

Lingāyata or Vīraśaiva is a militant form of Śaivism which flourished in the Karnataka region about the twelfth century AD. The founder of this system was Vasava. The Vīraśaivas do not believe in the traditional caste-hierarchy and are opposed to smoking and drinking. They believe in the equality of man and woman. They support female education and widow remarriage. Poor and oppressed peoples receive special attention from them. So far as their theoretical viewpoint is concerned, the Vīraśaivas believe that the potential and material movement of the absolute is called Śiva, while its actual and formal movement is called Śakti. Śiva as *brahman* is both material and efficient cause of the world. Through his Śakti he is the material cause and in his own nature the efficient cause. The relation is relative and not indicative of a real difference for there is identity between Śakti and Śaktimat, as between attributes and substance. The real nature of Śiva is like the luminescence of a gem which the gem itself cannot realise. This realisation is possible only by Śakti. That is why the relation between Śiva and Śakti is that of identity, *tādātmya* or *sāmarasya*, as that between heat and fire, light and sun. The Vīraśaivas also believe in the realisation of identity with Śiva through devotion. They carry a small *śivaliṅga* on the body. Except this they worship no other image.

The devotional tradition created by the Nāyanmār saints was later developed into a religio-philosophical system called Śaiva Siddhānta through the efforts of Myekaṇḍadeva (thirteenth century) and his followers. According to Śaiva Siddhānta, *prakṛti*, the material cause of the universe, is unconscious like clay and so it cannot organise itself into the world. As the jar has the potter for its efficient cause, the staff and wheel for its instrumental cause, and clay for its material cause, so also the world has Śiva for its efficient cause, Śakti for its instrumental cause and Māyā for its material cause. The Śaiva Siddhānta explains the evolution of the world in terms of thirty-six principles as against the twenty-five principles of the *Sāṅkhya.* In the practical aspects of religion the followers of the Śaiva Siddhānta school believe in absolute devotion to be achieved through *caryā* (practice), *kriyā* (action), *yoga* (concentration) and *jñāna* (knowledge). In the first stage the devotee should feel like a servant of God, in the second stage as his son, in the third stage as his associate and in the fourth stage as identical with him. These stages are known by the terms *sālokya*, *sāmīpya*, *sārūpya* and *sāyujya.* These terms received special significance in Vaiṣṇavism.

Like the Śaiva schools mentioned above, various Vaiṣṇava schools were also formed in which *bhakti* and liberalism were grafted on the theistic interpretations of the Vedānta. Needless to say that Śrī Caitanya had derived the main impulses of his doctrine from the tradition set up by the Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas. According to Rāmānuja's (AD 1016-1137) Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda, the entire creative process is the self-expression of *brahman* which reveals itself in creation. *Brahman* is *sat* (real) without a second and becomes the manifold of the sentient and non-sentient beings, the purpose of which is to give an opportunity to the finite beings to realise their divine destiny. *Brahman* assumes three forms—*bhoktā* or the enjoyer manifested in *cit* or individual souls, *bhogya* or the enjoyable manifested in a*cit* or the material world and *prerita* manifested in Īśvara or Paramātman, the cause of creation, preservation and destruction. According to Rāmānuja this *brahman* is no other than Viṣṇu who appears to his devotees in five forms: *parā*, *vyūha*, *vibhava*, *antaryāmin* and *arcā.* The Śakti of Viṣṇu is Lakṣmī. The relation between Viṣṇu and his energy is one of inseparable connection like substance and quality. After the death of Rāmānuja, the Śrīvaiṣṇava sect founded by him was subdivided into two groups, Vaḍakalai and Ṭenkalai, the former depending on Brahmanical tradition, Brahmanical social and legal system and Sanskrit language, and the latter on non-Brahmanical and non-Sanskritic traditions with a total rejection of rituals, external formalities, inequality in the caste system and social authoritarianism. In the field of devotion the Veḍakalai group believed in *markata-mārga* (the devotee should cling to God just as a monkey-child clings to its mother) while the Ṭenkalai group believed in *mārjāra-mārga* (the devotee should remain effortless and surrender to God's will just as a kitten remains quite passive in its mother's mouth when she carries it from one place to another).

Nimbārka of the twelfth century was another great exponent of Southern Vaiṣṇavism. According to his philosophy, known as Dvaitādvaita, *brahman* is both material (*upādāna*) and instrumental (*nimitta*) cause of the world. *Brahman* is not an impersonal absolute, but a personal God—Kṛṣṇa or Hari. His Śakti or energy is Rādhā. At the beginning of creation he manifests his *cit-śakti* (power of sentience) and *acit-śakti* (power of non-sentience) in the form of soul and *prakṛti*, and from the latter there is a gradual evolution of the material world. Since there is always a difference between the cause and the effect there must be some difference between *brahman* and the universe. Again the non-difference between them is no less true since in creation the effect is the cause itself. This cause-effect relation between *brahman* and the world is that of identity-in-difference (*dvaitādvaita*). The sect founded by Nimbārka is known as Sanaka.

Madhva, the founder of the Brahma sect, flourished in Karnataka about the beginning of the thirteenth century. According to his Dvaita of dualistic philosophy, *brahman* is *alaukika* (transcendental) and hence empirical knowledge will not help in determining his conception. The world of *cit* (sentient) and *acit* (non-sentient) is real, essentially *paratantra* or dependent having derived its reality from *brahman* who is no other than Viṣṇu whose Śakti is Lakṣmī. The sect founded by Madhva was later subdivided into two groups —Vyāsakūṭa and Dāsakūṭa. The former was conservative like the Vaḍakalai of the Śrī-Vaiṣṇavas while the latter was liberal.

The Śuddhādvaita school of Vallabha, also known as Rudra school, considers *brahman* as the embodiment of *sat* (existence), *cit* (consciousness), *ānanda* (bliss) and *rasa* (sentiment). For *līlā* (sport) he creates the world out of himself, and is thus both the efficient and material cause of the world. He does not undergo any change even when he transforms himself into the world. This doctrine is known as *avikṛta pariṇāma*. This *brahman* is no other than Kṛṣṇa. He represents the principle of love by which his relation with the individual souls is determined. This love is of that type which takes place between a man and a woman. The female principle is idealised in Rādhā. Every individual should feel womanly passion for the beloved who is one and only one, the eternal lover Kṛṣṇa. The Vallabha sect believe in *puṣṭimārga* or worldly enjoyment which is not considered a bar to spiritual realisation.

It is against this background that Caitanyaism should be viewed and interpreted. The biographies of Śrī Caitanya present him as an idealised personality, a combine of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, an embodiment of a *tattva* or world-view. Just as in Christianity it is held that Jesus being the eternal son of God became man, being conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary, and that inasmuch as he is thus God and Man in two distinct natures but in one form that had appeared wearing the manhood which he had taken to himself and carried with him to the cross, so also Śrī Caitanya has been regarded as having all the faculties of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, and that facts of his life have been described, as it were, the same as those of the divine pair. Even in one account it is stated that his left heel was pierced by a brick-flake which caused his death. This was evidently modelled after the Kṛṣṇa legends, as the death of Kṛṣṇa also happened in the same way when an arrow hit his left heel. At the same time Śrī Caitanya is also considered to be the incarnation of Rādhā, and that is why the love-ecstasy of Rādhā has been attributed to the last phase of his career.

Therefore in order to trace the roots of Caitanyaism one has at first to understand Śrī Caitanya as a man and also the spirit of the age which conditioned his thought and behaviour. Notwithstanding the attribution of divinity to him by his devoted biographers, three important elements can be traced, identified and documented which contributed immensely to the shaping of his own ideas. The first is that he was greatly influenced by the main tenets of Islam with which almost all the medieval saints came in touch. That he was acquainted with the essentials of Islam is attested by the *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta* episode which deals with his discussions on Islam with the Pathan chiefs whom he converted eventually. The second is that he was always an erudite scholar, well versed both in the non-theistic and the theistic interpretation of Vedānta. The interpretation of the southern Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas attracted him and that is why very frequently he used to visit the South and exchanged his ideas with Rāmānanda Rāya and others. He went also to the West where he was acquainted with the growing concepts of pure devotion in terms of love between Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* which were later given a new dimension by Narasiṃha Mehta who brought these concepts in accordance with a theistic interpretation of Vedānta on the foundation of egalitarian social principles. Śri Caitanya's formulation of the Acintyabhedābheda doctrine was the consequence of all these. The third is that he was a product of the Sahajiyā tradition of Bengal. Owing to his association with this tradition he was able to add a new dimension in the concept of Kṛṣṇa-Rādhā communion.

As a key to the understanding of Śrī Caitanya's interest in Islam one has to be acquainted with the peculiar historical conditions in which Islam found a stronghold in Bengal. The advent of Islam and its great success, especially in the eastern districts of Bengal admits of some explanation. Bengal was always very far from the political strongholds of Islam in northern India where, notwithstanding immense political pressure, only a section of the urbanised population was Islamised. But in Bengal the villagers, *en masse*, were converted to Islam. The supposed reason that the downtrodden and oppressed castes adopted Islam is not tenable on the ground that elsewhere such oppressed people did not embrace Islam and that even after adopting Islam the oppressed communities had no better fate or better social status, since they were and are still looked down upon as *ajlaf* or *atraf*, i.e. of low status by the north-Indian Muslims who style themselves as *ashraf* or of nobler origin. In reality, the cause of the phenomenal success of Islam in Bengal was connected with the pattern of its religious life and its changing structural set-up. It should be stressed that Bengal was always outside the pale of Vedism and Brahmanism. The Sena kings tried to introduce Brahmanism, but no tangible result was obtained. True, there were some Brāhmaṇas in Bengal following the Smārta-Paurāṇic tradition, but there was no organised Brahmanism even to check the ruralisation of the once-powerful Brahmanical deities. There were Buddhist *vihāras* in which only a handful of most sophisticated intellectuals were engaged in formulating the philosophy of illusion by means of subtlest logic to prove that the existence of the world was false, while others were engaged in de-Buddhaising Buddhism by blending it with all sorts of local elements. Barring the old village deities of primitive tribal origin which are worshipped even today irrespective of rank, caste, creed or special religious belief, the important cults and sects of Bengal evolved in accordance with the rapid metamorphosis of Buddhism —the metamorphosis which eventually made the existence of Buddhism, even in name, redundant. These tendencies led to the emergence of numerous isolated and flexible systems which failed to confront the organised approach of Islam. The people at large, the agricultural communities, detribalised not long before and devoid of any deeply ingrained attachment to a traditional well-established creed, had no problem in embracing Islam which appeared to them as more dependable than any existing system.

The process was not overlooked by Śrī Caitanya who felt the need of setting up a creed based on egalitarian principles. The task was entrusted to Rūpa and Sanātana because, in his own words, they were previously tested royal officers who dealt with worldly persons of different types and knew what was suitable for the people in general. The substratum of the creed was evidently founded upon a theistic interpretation of Vedānta which came to be known as Acintyabhedābheda. It holds that *brahman* is the material as well as the efficient cause of the universe and that it transforms itself into the universe remaining unaffected by the transformation. There are three main *śaktis* of *brahman: svarūpa* or *cit* (the sentient), *māyā* (non-sentient material element same as *acit*) and *jīva* (intermediate). *Brahman* creates the world with the help of its *māyā-śakti* which has two aspects, *guṇa-māyā* and *jīva-māyā*, the former consisting of the three *guṇas* or qualities transforming at the time of creation into the constituents of the material world, and the latter with the power transmitted helps the creation by making individuals forget their selves and their relation with *brahman*. The universe is the *pariṇāma* (transformation) of *brahman* transfused with the *māyā-śakti* but still remaining untouched by *māyā*. *Brahman* is the same as Kṛṣṇa who has a form resembling that of a human being but who is really infinite and all-pervading.

The Śakti or energy of *brahman* which is inseparable from it, just like heat in fire, has been viewed in terms of a symbolic Female Principle, while *brahman* in terms of a Male Principle symbolised by sectarian supreme beings like Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa or Śiva. This Śakti was conceived by Rāmānuja and Madhva as Lakṣmī and by Nimbārka, Vallabha and Caitanya as Rādhā. The doctrine of Rādhā found its first expression in the poems of the Āḷvār poetess Āṇḍāl. Kṛṣṇa's sport with the *gopis* was foreshadowed in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* which was composed in about ninth-tenth century AD. The relation between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa has been viewed from a special angle in Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda* (twelfth century), the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* (thirteenth century) and in the poems of Vidyāpati and Caṇḍidāsa. This special angle is the Sahajiyā viewpoint which was emanated from the Buddhist Sahajayāna. The union of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, like that of the Buddhist Karuṇā and Śūnyatā or Upāya and Prajñā symbolises the union of the Male and Female Principles. The Vaiṣṇava theory and practice of unconventional love (*parakīyā*) is a direct adaptation of the Sahajiyā Buddhist way of life. Vaiṣṇava poets and apostles like Jayadeva, Vidyāpati, Caṇḍidāsa, Rūpa, Sanātana, Jīva Gosvāmī and others were believed to be exponents in Sahajiyā practices. Even Śrī Caitanya himself has been held as having practised *Sahaja-sādhanā* and attained perfection through it.

As is known to all, Mahāyāna Buddhism in its later phases became a composite system of heterogeneous faiths and practices. Sahajayāna was one of its offshoots which insisted on rejection of all external formalities in spiritual quest, recognition of human body as the microcosm of the universe and the centre of all spiritual experience and realisation of that experience as one of inexpressible happiness of the easiest (*sahaja-mahāsukha*). The Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇava tradition was rooted in this Buddhist Sajayayāna. Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇava texts like *Dvīpakojjvala*, *Ratívilāsapaddhati* etc. refer to the union of man and woman in two forms *prākṛta* and *aprākṛta*, the former in the natural plane and the latter in the supernatural. The body is considered as Vṛndāvana, the site of Kṛṣṇa's sport, where resides Sahaja in the nature of pure love which flows between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in the form of *rasa* and *rati*, the realisation of which is known as *āropa*. All beings are born of Sahaja, they live in Sahaja and again return to Sahaja.

In different tantric texts having Buddhist affiliation mention is made of the Siddhas and sects like Siddhakaula, Siddhamṛta, etc. Eighty-four traditional Siddhas are mentioned in different lists. From their names it appears that most of them belonged to the lower castes and lower professions. There were five *kulas* or brands of Siddha culture known as Ḍombī, Naṭī, Rajakī, Caṇḍālī and Brāhmaṇī. They believed that *jivanmukti* or liberation within the span of life in the form of immortality was possible by *parāvṛtti* or the *opposite*, i.e. by giving the vital fluid an upward motion, and also by the use of mercurial drug. The Nātha Siddhas, who had wide following from Punjab to Assam, came mostly from the lower castes. Mīnanātha belonged to the group of fishermen. In Nepal and Tibet he was known by the synonym Matsyendranātha and was identified with the Buddhist deity Avalokiteśvara. Among a class of Bengali Muslims, Matsyendra was turned into a *pīr* called Machandalī or Mochrā. Gorakṣanātha, too, was a fisherman belonging to Keotia or Kaivarta caste. The derivative meaning of Jālandharī, which was another name of the third Siddha Hāḍi-pā, is 'net-holder.' Actually he belonged to the Hāḍi or sweeper caste.

One should not fail to notice in this connection that the arrival of Islam had a powerful impact on social life. The confusion and lacuna in the field of religious or spiritual life presented conditions which were responsible for the emergence of the downtrodden castes which produced spiritual leaders who were even able to command respect from persons belonging to the higher ranks of social hierarchy. The main features of this new wave—represented by the Siddhācāryas, followers of Nāthism, Avadhūtas and the sects introduced by the medieval reformers—were the revival of primitive beliefs and practices, of course not in their original forms, a simpler and less formal approach to the personal deity, orientation of the life by the instruction of the *guru* or preceptor, a liberal and respectful attitude towards women, a more humanistic and less mechanistic attitude towards caste system though not its rejection as a whole, realization of the ideal of non-duality with the ultimate world-ground, renovation of the body and mind by Yogic practices and so on. This wave may also be described as the Lokāyata or popular wave emanating from grass-root levels.

Though he came from the Brahmanical caste and had a sophisticated training in Sanskrit language and in the Vedānta along with other known branches of Indian philosophy, the base of Śrī Caitanya was Lokāyata and that is why his ideas had a very easy and wide acceptance among the downtrodden and the castes belonging to the lower levels of social hierarchy. It is also a fact that although there were many Brāhmaṇas who were his followers, the Brāhmaṇas in general did not support him. There is a controversy among the scholars whether Śrī Caitanya had rejected the caste system. This controversy presents a fallacy of misplaced concreteness. None of the medieval saints did ever make any attempt to abolish the caste system, because they knew full well that it was humanly impossible, as it is impossible even today. In

Indian context, the functional role of the caste system has always been beneficial. Its merit lies in its occupational and enodgamous grouping, and in the autonomy each caste enjoys in relation to its own laws, customs, cults and rituals. In India it is the caste that gives one identity. Its demerit lies only in its commitment to social inequality and the evils resulting therein. But as a whole the system, notwithstanding its limitations, has proved efficacious, and that is why it survives even in the end of the twentieth century. Here, even a religion like Islam, which is strictly opposed to any form of social division, allow the formation of caste features among the Muslims. Even the sects introduced by the medieval saints and reformers by bringing together men of different castes were also transformed in the course of time into distinct castes. What Śrī Caitanya and his counterparts in other parts of India tried to do was to infuse a new outlook into this system. They advised their followers to follow their caste professions and usages honestly, but no to entertain any feeling or superiority or inferiority in regard to other castes. They urged that a Brāhmaṇa should honour and pay respect to a non-Brāhmaṇa if the latter is honest, truthful and god-oriented. A pious man, even belonging to the lowest caste, may act as the preceptor of a Brāhmaṇa. This was their concept of equality.

Śrī Caitanya was not an isolated phenomenon. He was part of a liberal movement which was then taking place all over India launched by the Hindu *bhaktas* and Muslim Sufis. The *bhakti* movement was renovated in north India by Rāmānanda, who was fifth in descent from the great southern teacher Rāmānuja. There is a popular saying that *bhakti* arose first in the Drāviḍa land; Rāmānanda brought it to the north; and Kabir spread it to the seven continents and nine divisions of the world. According to him, God is not the unconditioned *brahman* of the Vedānta. He is one without any imperfection. He is the embodiment of love, grace and mercy and resides in the heart of all beings. Ramānanda gave up the use of Sanskrit and started preaching in the language of the people, thus laying the foundation of modern regional literatures. Among his disciples, Ravidāsa was a cobbler by birth. He preached that God resides within the hearts of his devotees and cannot be known through the performing rites and ceremonies. More than thirty hymns of Ravidāsa have been incorporated in the *Granth Sāhib* of the Sikhs. Sena, another disciple of Rāmānanda, was a barber by caste. Dhanna was a peasant and Jat while Pīpā was the ruler of a small principality. All of them flourished in the fifteenth century and had numerous followers. The sects introduced by them are still now in vogue. It is said that Mīrābāi whose devotional songs are most popular even today was a disciple of Ravidāsa.

Kabir, also a disciple of Rāmānanda, belonged to the fifteenth century. He was the son of a Mohammedan weaver. He did not make any distinction between the Hindus and Muslims. He preached that there was no truth in the external religious symbols and observances, in the sects and scriptures. He insisted on the language of people for spiritual expression. He has left behind many poems and songs which are extremely popular in all parts of India even today. Kabir did not found any sect. After his death his Mohammedan disciples organised themselves in Maghar where they founded a monastery. His Hindu disciples were organised into an order by Surat Gopal with their centre in Banaras. Among the followers of Kabir, Dharmadāsa, who was a Bania by caste, formed a sect. Malukdāsa of the sixteenth century was also a follower of Kabir. The monasteries of his sect are found all over north India. The most important of the followers of Kabir was Dādū of the sixteenth century. The aim of his life was to unite all the divergent faiths with one bond of love and comradeship, and with this end in view be had founded the Parabrahma sect. His disciples Sundaradāsa and Rajjab were also important personalities of the medieval *bhakti* movements of northern India. Among other followers Kabir Bhan Saheb and Dharaṇīdāsa should specially be mentioned.

There were other medieval mystics in northern India who did not belong to the group of Rāmānanda's disciples, but preached the same or similar ideals of love, tolerance and devotion. Among them Sadan or Sadnā was a butcher by caste whose poems have been incorporated in the *Granth Sāhib*. Apart from the celebrated Nāmadeva of Maharashtra, there were three other Nāmadevas whose seats were respectively in Gurdaspur, Bulandshahr and Marwar. Anantānanda had a monastery at Galta near Jaipur. His disciple Kṛṣṇadāsa had two important followers. One of them Kilha had founded the Khaki sect in north-west India. The other was Nābhāl, an untouchable by birth, was the celebrated author of the *Bhaktamālā*. Tulasīdāsa, whose *Rāmacaritamānasa* in Hindi has been regarded as a classic, had a large number of devotees all over northern India. Suradāsa whose devotional songs are sung all over India even today belonged to the sixteenth century.

In eastern India the *bhakti* movement was initiated by Śaṅkaradeva of Assam and Śrī Caitanya of Bengal and Orissa. In northern India it was launched by Rāmānanda, Kabir and their followers. In the north-west, the lead was taken by Guru Nanak (AD 1469-1538), the founder of Sikhism who sought to harmonise in it the tenets of both Hinduism and Islam, to do away with caste distinctions and to liberalise other social practices. He was followed by nine other *gurus* in succession under whom Sikhism became an organised system. In Gujarat the *bhakti* movement had found a new dimension in the hands of Narasiṃha Mehta whose ideas were almost similar to those of Śrī Caitanya. In the Karnataka region one branch of the followers of Madhva formed a liberal line of Vaiṣṇavism which came to be known as Dāsakūṭa. It was enriched and made popular by Śrīpadarāja, Vyāsarāya, Purandaradāsa, Kaṇakadāsa, Vadirāja, Vijayadāsa and Jagannāthadāsa. The *bhakti* movement was launched in Maharashtra as early as in the thirteenth century by Jñānadeva whose *Jñaneśvarī* is still now recognised as one of the most significant commentaries of the *Bhagavadgītā*. Jñānadeva was followed by Nāmadeva, Ekanātha, Tukārāma and Rāmadāsa.

It should also be pointed out in this connection that the Arabic and Persian classical Sufism had already been known in India from about the tenth century, but by about the beginning of the fourteenth, Sufism had been fully acclimatised in India and had assumed a great deal of local colour. The protagonists of the medieval *bhakti* movements discovered a close kinship of spirit and behaviour pattern among the Muslim Sufi mystics whose influence among the common masses was considerable, notwithstanding the disapproval of official and orthodox Islam. This medieval mystics brought about a remarkable synthesis between some of the basic elements of *bhakti* on the one hand and of the indigenous unsophisticated cults and Sufism on the other. This synthesis has come to be known as Sant synthesis. Rāmānanda, Kabir, Nāmadeva, Nānak, Dādū, Ravidāsa, Rajjab, Tulasīdāsa, Śrī Caitanya, to name only a few from amongst a host of others, all belonged to this syncretistic trend. But it has also to be admitted that each one of them came to function in a given social situation, in a given region and in the context of a given tradition. In each case, therefore, the movement took different shape, form and style, but the attitude was based on a powerful emotion characterised by an intense love for and devotion to God.

Although some ancient writers and commentators have used the term Lokāyata in the sense of defining the atheistic systems like those of the Cārvākas and others, we prefer to use the term, as its meaning implies, to denote the popular substratum of the teachings of the medieval saints. There is, however, a similarity between the mode of argument of the atheists and that of the exponents of the medieval *bhakti* movements. Sarahapāda of the earlier Sahajiyā tradition (which may be regarded as one of the sources from which the *bhakti* movement had derived its impulses) asks in his *Dohākoṣa*:

> How can the Brāhmaṇas be regarded as the highest of men, when the myth of their dropping from the mouth of Brahmā is invented by certain knaves? If a man becomes a Brāhmaṇa by initiation or by reciting the Vedas, then why cannot a man of lower caste be a Brāhmaṇa by doing all these, especially when he also reads the Vedas in the grammar which contains many Vedic words and phrases? What is the use of offering *ghee* to the fire when nothing is achieved by it except eye-infection by smoke? Is it not for the greed of money for which the widows, the Mundis and others are given training in the vows and observances? If only by becoming naked one attains liberation, why not the dogs should be regarded as the best candidates for attaining it? If liberation be attained by tearing of hairs, why not then the hips of women recommended as the best medium of liberation? What will one do with lamps, offerings, *mantras* and services? What is the good in going to holy places or to the hermitage? Can liberation be attained only by bathing in holy waters?

The concept of *sahaja*, as we have seen above, was common to all medieval thinkers. Etymologically it is *sahajāta*, that which is the same as human nature itself. God, by whatever name or attribute, it may be characterised resides in the heart of man. The realisation of God as identical with one's own self is the basis of most medieval *bhakti* movements. In Sikhism the realisation of this *sach* or *sahaja* is that of the personal God in the individual self. In the *Ādi-Granth* it is said that this stage is the fourth state (*cauṭhā-pad*) beyond the three qualities of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* and is known as *param-pad* or *turīya-pad* or *sahaj-pad*. It is the source of eternal light which causes the light of the individual soul to merge into that of God in the same way as a drop of water merges into the sea. It is that state in which the individual soul merges into the universal soul where there is an end to all sorts of dualism. Nanak called this state *jivanmukti* or *suni* (*śūnya*)—*samādhi*, *sahaj-samādhi* and *sahaj-yoga* and its experience as *mahā-sukh*, *param-sukh* and *param-ānand*. In fact *sahaja* is not only the ultimate reality, it is Īśvara or Lord, the last resort, full of life, into which the self merges completely: *jākai antar visai prabhu api nānak le jan sahaji samāti*. (cf. *infra*, Niharranjan Ray's article).

We have already had the occasion to refer to the influence of Sufism on the medieval *bhakti* movements. The Sufis were unorthodox in religious beliefs and practices, indifferent to external happiness or sorrow, and guided by spiritual emotion. They depended more on the reason of the heart than on the injunctions of the scriptures. In Sufism greatest emphasis is laid upon the mental entity of man. But how should the individual realise God within his or her own self? The answer is presented in two categories—*tariqat* or way and *marifat* or knowledge. The way consists of seven stages—service, love, sacrifice, meditation, concentration, union and equation. Knowledge is of two kinds—*ilm* or that which is received from known sources like perception, inference, etc., and *marifat* or which is obtained through grace of God. The Indian Sufis were divided into two broad categories—those who believed in absolute non-dualism (*yujudiya*) and those who had some reservation (*suhudiya*). The former held everything to be the manifestation of God while the latter considered everything as produced from God. The Sufis placed spiritual knowledge (*marifat*) above the scriptural injunctions (*shariat*). They built numerous holy resorts and institutions where under the guidance of *pirs* and *murshids* the aspirants were led to self-realisation.

By the fourteenth century of the Christian era Sufism was completely absorbed in Indian soil. It was assimilated on the one hand with different streams of ideas emanating from the theistic interpretations of the Vedānta and on the other with the popular streams represented by the Tantric-Sahajiyā and other Lokāyata traditions. How smoothly the Sufi ideas could work in the Indian mind may be exemplified with reference to the Bauls of Bengal. Outpouring from the heart constitutes the most important religious mode with the Bauls as is revealed by their songs. In these we find on the one hand the influence of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism and on the other that of Sufi *sama*. The Sufi insistence on *guruvāda*—the essentiality of preceptor in spiritual exercise—and on human body as the microcosm of the universe is shared alike by the tantrics, Sahajiyās, Āuls, Bāuls and most of the medieval religious sects that based their creeds on liberalism. The conception of the man of heart which is found in the Baul songs really represents a mixture of the conceptions of the ultimate truth in the popular or Lokāyata tradition and in Sufism. The Sufi concepts of divination, of creation proceeding from love, of the cosmos supported by love, of the dual nature of man as finite and infinite, human and divine, of the imagery of the lover and the beloved in God's relation with man, etc. have a close affinity with medieval Indian religious ideas.

Needless to say that the views of Śrī Caitanya were conditioned by the new outlook of his own age. The *bhakti* movement launched by Śrī Caitanya and his illustrious contemporaries had a great effect on the mind of Indian masses. One of the direct effects of this movement was the emergence of the language of the masses as the medium of religious expression. Kabir said: *saṃskṛt kūpjal, bhāṣā bahatā nīr*, implying that Sanskrit is like the stagnant water of a well while the language of the masses is like an everflowing stream. The life and activities of Śri Caitanya had a great impact on Bengali literature. Numerous works composed on him brought a qualitative change in regard to the form and content of Bengali literature. Among the Oriya disciples of Śrī Caitanya, Balarāma Dāsa translated the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Bhagavadgītā* and *Vedāntasāra* into Oriya. Among his other Oriya dirciples Jagannātha Dāsa translated the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. Besides there came into existence a vast mass of Caitanya literature in Oriya. Śaṅkaradeva of Assam was himself a prolific writer whose critical acumen had brought a standardisation in Assamese literature and whose lucidity of pen made his works acceptable to all sections of peoples. He translated the last canto of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and parts of *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* in Assamese, composed *Kirtaṇaghoṣā* in 2398 verses and thirty poems, and also poetical works like *Rukmiṇiharaṇa*, *Bhaktipradipa* and *Niminavasiddhānta-saṃvāda*. He was the first to introduce one-act plays (*aṅkiyā-nāṭa*) in Assamese. His disciple Mādhavadeva also enriched Assamese literature. Marathi literature was practically initiated by the Nātha saints and was immensely enriched by Jñānadeva, the celebrated author of *Jñāneśvarī* and *Amṛtānubhava.*

Around Cakradhara, who initiated a *bhakti* movement in the thirteenth century, was developed a *bhakti* literature contributed by Mahimabhaṭṭa, Dāmodara, Narendra, Bhāskarabhaṭṭa and others. The *padāvalī* literature in Marathi was enriched by Nāmadeva, Tukārāma, Janābāi, Narasiṃha Sarasvatī, Janārdana Svāmī, Ekanātha and others. In the South the Ṭenkalais and other protestants banked on Tamil and the Vīraśaivas made Kannada the medium of their religio-philosophical expressions. Sikhism was responsible for the emergence of the local Punjabi. The first writer in Punjabi literature was Baba Fariduddin of Multan whose language, however, was not pure Punjabi. The *Janamsathi* which was composed in 1538 was based on the life and mission of Guru Nanak. The *Ādi Granth* was compiled in 1604 during the patriarchy of Guru Arjun. Sufism in Hindi was introduced by Amir Khusrav (1253-1325). Khaja Baudh Nawaj (1321-1422) composed an authentic work on Sufism under the title *Mir-at-ul-Asifin* in southern Hindi, but it was so burdened with Arabic and Persian words that some scholars prefer to call it the earliest specimen of Urdu. In the fifteenth century the *dohās* of Kabir brought a qualitative change in Hindi literary tradition. These were originally composed in Bhojpuri but were later rendered into Brajabhāṣā, Kharibolī and Awadhī. Likewise the songs of Mīrābāi (1492-1556) were originally composed in Rajasthani and these were rendered into Brājabhāṣā, Kharibolī and Gujarati.

It is also interesting to note that the development of regional languages in Eastern Europe began to take place when the *Bible* was translated into these languages owing to the influence of the Reformation movement which coincided chronologically with the medieval *bhakti* movements of India. Sanskrit being the language of the intellectual elite, regional spoken languages and dialects of the common people did have hardly any chance of coming to the fore, but for the efforts of the medieval saints. The sketch of literary activities outlined above is sufficient to suggest the degree and extent of the acceptance of the teachings of the medieval saints by the masses. Their teachings in popular languages wiped away the hurdles on the road to the freedom of the human spirit by which these teachers meant direct communion and establishment of complete identity with a personal God. At the same time it has also to be admitted that the devotional, often mystical, obscure and esoteric but protestant and heterogeneous ideas, which had long been lying low and submerged under the pressure of the dominant Brahmanical faiths and ideas, rites and customs, practices and patterns of behaviour, had also influenced a section of the Brāhmaṇas and intellectual elites. In the Punjab Brahmanism lost much of its influence owing to the first alien Turkish ouslaught and its attendant fury, plunder, bloodshed and conversion. It was in this context that Guru Nanak launched his reform movement and eventually succeeded in setting up a creed of his own. His followers comprised mostly agricultural and trading castes and also castes belonging to the lower ranks of the social hierarchy. That is why Sikhism was able to retain a proletarian character through the ages. In the case of the Caitanya movement the case has been somewhat different. To a certain extent his doctrines were given a highly philosophical sophistication in accordance with the Brahmanical tradition, thus calling forth a sharp division in the creed. In course of time we come across a multiplication of Caitanyite sub-sects and barring only a few, most of them were manned by persons belonging to the lower levels of society. There was a similar transformation in Assam where the followers of Śaṅkaradeva had founded different caste-oriented sects.

Although some aspects of the medieval *bhakti* movements are known to us, or have been viewed by the historians from their own angles of vision, much remains to be known, understood and interpreted. The present volume, issued on the occasion of the completion of the five-hundredth year of Śrī Caitanya, is an humble attempt to understand a little more of the medieval *bhakti* movements in India. The contributors of the volume who have enthusiastically agreed to participate in this project are all specialists in their own fields and their valuable papers are expected to throw new light on many hitherto unknown or less known features of the great historical movement, the far-reaching consequences of which are very much lively in the heart of the Indian masses even today. There are of course divergences in the views of the contributors who have tried to visualise the aspects and significance of medieval *bhakti* movement from their own individual viewpoints. The papers on Guru Nanak bear testimony of this, and the divergence makes very interesting reading. In the case of the southern *bhakti* movements individual opinions and understanding very widely. While some of the contributors have treated the southern *bhakti* phenomena in terms of simple human emotional quest of and surrender to the divine, others have found conflicts of sectarianism and other contradictions. In one paper the socio-economic background is emphasised. We tried to collect a few more papers on the socio-economic background of *bhakti*, especially on the new trend of thought which seeks to interpret *bhakti* in terms of feudalistic formations, but these were not recived. Again, in the assessment of Prāṇ Nāth, the contributors have basic agreement in their viewpoints. We are fortunate to present three generations of the *bhakti* movement in Assam represented respectively by Śaṅkaradeva, Dāmodaradeva and Aniruddhadeva. Apart from papers on regional development and distribution of the *bhakti* movement, we have also been able to present a few on the ingredients and influences, even from the Vedic, Jain and Islamic sources, which had worked in the background as its necessary constituents. A detailed bibliography containing list of books and papers used by the contributors in preparing their articles and also other works pertaining to the *bhakti* concept has been supplied in this volume which may be useful to subsequent researchers in this field. An index has also been provided which will also be helpful to the readers.

1

Religion of Love: The Early Medieval Phase (*c.* AD 700-1486)

BIMANBEHARI MAJUMDAR*

The religion of love becomes more concrete and articulate in the period extending from the eighth to the fifteenth century of the Christian era. It is interesting to recall that Rābiā and Muhasibi Dhu'l-Nūn, Kulaśekhara and Periya Āḷvār flourished, and Āṇḍāl and Ācārya Śaṅkara were born in the eighth century. The ninth century witnessed the infusion of the Vedantic teachings into Sufism through the activities of Abū 'Alī al-Sindī and his disciple Abū Yazīd or Bāyāzīd of Bistam. A new orientation is given to Sufism by al-Hallāj in the tenth century AD. The next century is covered by Yāmunācārya and Rāmānuja (AD 1016-1137) on the one hand and al-Ghazali (AD 1058-1111) on the other. The twelfth century has got the distinction of producing St. Bernard (1090-1153), Jilani (1077-1166) and Jayadeva. Jalāluddīn Rūmī (1207-73) and St. Francis of Assisi flourished in the thirteenth century. Great exponents of the religion of love like Jan Van Ruysbroeck (1293-1381), Henry Suso (1295-1381), St. Catherine of Genoa (1347-80) and Sheikh Nizāmuddin Auliā adorned the fourteenth century. The fifteenth century was the century of Caṇḍīdāsa, Vidyāpati and Thomas A. Kempis.

Sufism is fundamentally a religion of love. In the second century of the Hijra era Sufis decried those who worshipped God from fear or hope as the meanest and basest of men. On being asked what for did a Sufi worship God, a Sufi replied "For love, for His love makes me serve and obey Him." Fuzeyl Ayyāz said, "I worship God in love, because I cannot bear not to worship Him."[1] Sufis like Dhu'l-Nūn of Egypt and Ābul-Hussayn al-Nurī were prosecuted before the Caliph, because the orthodox theologians maintained that there could be no love between God and man since God is totally unlike any created thing and love is possible only between like and like.[2] Persecution which went to the extent of execution of al-Hallāj on March 15 AD 923 could not, however, deter the Sufis from giving expression to their sincerest belief. Rābiā of Basra who breathed her last at Jerusalem in *c.* AD 753 said "Love of God hath so absorbed me that neither love nor hate of any other thing remains in my heart." Again she wrote: "O my Lord, if I worship Thee for fear of hell, burn me in hell; and if I worship Thee for the hope of Paradise, exclude me thence; but if I worship Thee for Thine own sake, withhold not from me Thine eternal Beauty." Attracted by her saintly grace Muhammad Sylayman, the governor of Basra, offered to marry her. But she replied: "Verily, I should be ashamed to ask for worldly things from Him to which the world belongs: so, how should I ask for these from those to whom it does not belong?" Her earnest prayer to God was: "Whatever share of this world Thou dost bestow on me bestow it on Thine enemies, and whatever share of the next world thou dost give me, give it to Thy friend. Thou art enough for me." Of the long chain of women saints—Āṇḍāl, Mirabai, St. Teresa—who claimed to be the spouse of God—Rābiā appears to have been the earliest. She said: "The bonds of wedlock have descended upon me. I am not my own, but my Lord's and must not be unfaithful."[3]

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*The author passed away on 18 November 1969. This unpublished article is a part of his Stephanos Nirmalendu Ghosh Lectures at the Calcutta University, 1968-69.

Reynold A. Nicholson holds that Sufism was a natural development of the ascetic tendencies which manifested themselves within Islam during the Umayyad period. But it was influenced by Christianity, neo-Platonism, Gnosticism and possibly by Indian ideas.[4] R.C. Zaehner has proved on the basis of the evidence of Ābū-Nasr Abdullāh bin 'Alī al-Sirāj's *Kitāb al-Luma 'fi' l-Tasawwuf* that Ābū 'Alī al-Sindī, a junior contemporary of Śaṅkara, taught Abū Yazīd of Bistam the Vedantic doctrine of 'thou art that' and in return the latter taught him how to perform the obligatory duties of Islam. Abū Yazīd's teacher must have been such a new convert to Islam that he had to be taught the method of performing the religious observances of his new faith. In a collection of the sayings of Abū Yazīd by Sahlaji it is recorded that the former said: "I sloughed off my self as a snake sloughs off its skin; then I looked into myself and Lo! I was He."[5] There is little doubt that the simile of the skin of snake percolated into Sufism from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, which states: "Where all the desires that dwell in the heart are cast away, then does the mortal become immortal, then he attains *brahman* here (in this very body). Just as the slough of a snake lies on an anthill, dead, cast off, even so lies this body."[6] In the face of such clear evidence A.J. Arberry's contention that Abū 'Ali al-Sindī belonged to a village called Sind in Khorasan[7] and not in India seems untenable.

The Vaiṣṇavas are never tired of reiterating the idea that there cannot be a state of love under strict and complete identity of individual with God, nor can true love exist if one is awed by the grandeur and magnificence of the beloved God. In Abū Yazīd, however, we find an awareness of littleness in the presence of God. He is reported by Sahlajī to have said: "There is nothing marvellous in my love for thee, for I am a poor slave; but there is something quite marvellous in thy love for me, for thou art a mighty king, and not only a mighty king, but also the perfect object of love, for it is impossible to know thee, and not to love thee." The intensity of passionate love which is roused by the Lord never feels satiated and perceiving every moment the unfathomable riches of his infinite Being the mystic utters, "Is there yet more?" In his yearning for living the divine life he feels that self must be utterly annihilated. It is in this way that the majority of Sufis try to interpret Abū Yazīd's utterance "Glory be to me, I am the Lord Most High". Al-Hallāj who was executed nearly half a century after the death of Abū Yazīd for declaring 'Anā' l-Ḥaqq'-'I am God', said:

I am He whom I love, and He whom I love is I
We are two spirits dwelling in one body.

Abū Nasr Abdullāh bin 'Ali al-Sirāj tried to explain it away by drawing a distinction between God and the qualities of God. According to him God does not descend into the heart, but that which descends into the heart is faith in God and belief in His unity and reverence for the thought of Him. Again he distinguishes between humanity and the in-born qualities of humanity. He asserts that humanity does not depart from man any more than blackness departs from that which is black; it is only the cause of the in-born qualities of humanity by the all-powerful radiance which is shed from the divine Being. Hujwīrī, too, maintains that human attributes cannot become divine attributes and cites the instance of fire.

He explains: "The power of fire transforms to its own quality anything that fails into it, and surely the power of God's will is greater than that of fire; yet fire affects only the quality of iron without changing its substance, for iron can never become fire." Thus the monist view was explained away. The later Sufis somewhat like the Vaiṣṇava philosophers hold that God can be experienced by those who serve him with a loving heart and they will have union with God indeed, but their soul will still retain some trace of individuality.

Jalāluddīn Rūmī (1207-73), the greatest Sufi poet of Persia, traces in the *Masnavī* the progress of man almost like a believer in the theory of transmigration of soul.

I died from the mineral and became a plant;
I died from the plant and re-appeared in an animal;
I died from the animal and became a man;
Wherefore then should I fear? When did I grow less by dying?
Next time I shall die from the man
That I may grow the wings of the angels.
From the angel, too, must I seek advance,
"*All things shall perish says His Face*"
Once more shall I wing my way above the angels,
I shall become that which entereth not the imagination,
Then let me become naught, naught, for the hap-string
Grieth unto me 'Verily unto Him do we return.

To Rūmī, love is the solvent of all that stands in the way of spiritual uplift. He writes: "Love is the remedy of our pride and self-conceit, the physician of all our infirmities. Only he whose garment is rent by love becomes entirely unselfish."

Rūmī's wailings at separation from his beloved God are as heart-rending as those of Rādhā in the Vaiṣṇava lyrics. Here is one example:

O Beloved one, come and stroke my head in mercy
The palm of Thy hand on my head gives me rest[8]
Thy hand is a sign of Thy bounteous providence
Remove not Thy shadow from my head,
I am afflicted, afflicted, afflicted
Sleep has deserted my eyes

Through my longing for Thee, O Envy of Cypressess;
O take my life, thou art the source of life;
For apart from Thee I am wearied of my life.
I am a lover well versed in lover's madness.
I am weary of learning and sense.[9]

The Sufi poets are fond of using symbolic language. In using symbols they often speak of wine, the cup-bearer and earthly beauty. Some Western writers accuse them of being inspired partly by wine and strongly tinged with sensuality. But they forget that the Sufis, finding it impossible to indicate that they have experienced, borrow the impassioned language of the lover. The symbolical terms are explained in the *Gulshan-ī-Rāz* (rose garden of mystery). Where the Sufi says "Drink wine that it may set you free from yourself," he really means, "Lose your phenomenal self in the rapture of divine contemplation."[10] The cup-bearer is interpreted as the spiritual preceptor.

But it must be noted that the Sufis in the fifteenth century came to consider love with a woman or with a beardless youth as an essential prelude to divine love. Jāmī (1414-92) in his *Yūsuf ū Zuleykhā* writes:

Even from earthly love thy face avert not
since to the real it may serve to raise thee
If thy steps be strangers to love's pathway
Depart, learn, love and then return before me,
For, shouldst thou fear to drink wine from Form's flagon,
Thou canst not drain the draughts of Ideal.
But yet, beware! Be not by form belated:
Strive rather with all speed the bridge to traverse,
If to the bourn thou pain wouldst bear they baggae,
Upon the bride let not thy footsteps longer.

It is noteworthy that like the later Sufis the Buddhist as well as the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās regarded human love as a step for the realisation of divine love. But while the Sufis warn against tarrying too long in the bridge of human love, the Sahajiyās hold that man can realise his love-nature only through his relation to his sweetheart. The orthodox Vaiṣṇavas of the Caitanya sect, however, condemn such a theory and practice of the Sahajiyās in the strongest term, as will be shown in the next section.

In Sufism we find the devotee taking the initiative in love while the *Upaniṣad* states that he alone can realise Him, whom he selects. Rūmī writes:

> When in this heart the
> lighting spark of love arises
> Be sure this love is reciprocated
> in that heart.
> When the love of God arises in
> thy heart
> Without doubt God also feels
> love for that.

The Christian mystics speak of the grace of God as the fundamental principle of the loving relation between Soul and the Absolute. Jayadeva in his *Gīta-Govinda* represents Kṛṣṇa as calling each by name through his play on the flute to meet Him at the place of assignment—*Nāma-Samitam Kṛta-Saṅketam.* Similarly Eckhart (1260-1327) writes:

> Earth cannot escape the sky; let it flee up or down, the sky flows into it, and makes it fruitful whether it will or not. So God does to man. He who will escape Him only runs to His bosom; for all corners are open to Him.

St. Bernard (1090-1153) anticipated the Bengal school of Vaiṣṇavism in placing the loving relation with God as more intense than the relation of the servitor to the lord, or parents to children. He writes:

> Love receives its name from loving, not from honouring. Let one who is struck with dread, with astonishment, with fear, with admiration, rest satisfied with honouring, but all these feelings are absent in him who loves. Love is filled with itself, and where love has come it overcomes and transforms all other feelings. Wherefore the soul that loves, loves, and knows nought else. He who justly deserves to be honoured, justly deserves to be admitted and wondered at, yet He loves rather to be loved. They are Bridegroom and Bride. What other bond or constraining force

> to do you seek in between spouses than to be loved and to love? ...God, then, requires that He should be feared as Lord, honoured as Father but as Bridegroom loved. Which of these three, is highest and most to be preferred? Surely it is love, without it fear is painful and honour without attraction.[11]

This may be compared advantageously with the teaching of Caitanya to Rūpa Gosvāmin, the celebrated author of the *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi*. In the *dāsya-rasa* (the sentiment of servitude) Caitanya explained, the servitor serves the master as possessing full divine majesty. In the *madhura-rasa* (relation of love) can be found the constant attachment of the *śānta-rasa*, complete servitude of the *dāsya-rasa*, absence of difference of the *sakhya-rasa*, tender affection of parents towards their children of the *vātsalya-rasa* and above all these the total surrender of one's body and heart to the beloved.[12]

To St. Bernard wedded love provides the ideal for the soul in her relation to the Absolute. Married love and not the love for a lover indicates the dutifulness, faithfulness, irrevocability and loving obedience of the bride to the bridegroom. The imagery of bride and bridegroom did not originate with St. Bernard. In his commentary on the Canticle, Origin (AD 186-253) a leading father of the early Church called Jesus Christ or the Divine Lord as the Bridegroom and the devout soul as the Bride. St. Augustine used it occasionally and St. Gregory at least once. But none before St. Bernard gave any elaborate exposition of the tender relationship.

John of Ruysbroeck (1293-1381), the greatest of the Flemish mystics wrote an elegant work entitled the *Adornement of Spiritual Marriage* and sent a copy of it to a group of Rhenish mystics called the Friends of God in AD 1350. In delineating the character of the mystics of his own way of thinking he writes:

> Those who follow the way of love
> Are the richest of all men living:
> They are bold, frank, and fearless,
> They have neither travail nor care.
> For the Holy Ghost bears all their burdens.
> They seek no outward seeming,
> They desire nought that is esteemed of men,
> They affect not singular conduct,
> They would be like other good men.[13]

But the pain and restlessness of love would not allow them to behave like the ordinary good men. With practical experience of this love he was able to describe the inmost feelings of the mystic:

> This fury of love is an inward impatience which will hardly use reason or follow it, if it cannot obtain that which it loves. This inward fury eats a man's heart and drinks his blood. Here the sensible heat of love is fiercer than at any other stage in man's whole life; and his bodily nature is secretly wounded, and consumed without any outward work.[14]

John of Ruysbroeck explains the loving strife between the spirit of God and human spirit with a wealth of imagery. He writes: "God through the Holy Ghost inclines Himself towards us, and thereby, we are touched in love. And our spirit by God's working and by the power of love, presses and inclines itself into God; and thereby God is touched. From these two contacts there arises the strife of love, at the very deeps of this meeting; and in that most inward and ardent encounter, each spirit is deeply wounded by love."[15] Again, in his *Sparkling Stone* he speaks of the way of attaining to the God—seeing life. He writes:

> If we possess God in the immersion of love—that is, if we are lost to ourselves—God is our own and we are His own: and we sink ourselves eternally and irretrievably in our own possession, which is God. This immersion is essential; and is closely bound up with the state of love; and it continues whether we sleep or whether we wake, whether we know it or whether we know it not....And this down-sinking is like a river, which without pause or turning back ever pours into the sea; since this is its proper resting-place. So likewise when we possess God alone, the down-sinking of our being, with the love that belongs to it, flows forth, without return, into a fathomless experience which we possess and which is our proper resting-place.[16]

The fourteenth century has been called the golden age of mysticism. Eckhart (1293-1381), Henry Suso (*c.* 1295-1365), John of Ruysbroeck and the unknown author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* enriched the literature on the religion of love by their contributions. Eckhart ridiculed those who talked of loving God for the sake of any worldly advantage of pleasure. "Some people want to see God", writes Eckhart, "with their eyes as they see a cow, and to love Him as they love their cow—for the milk and cheese and profit it brings them. This is how it is with people who love God for the sake of outward wealth or inward comfort. They do not rightly love God, when they love Him for their own advantage." But he also draws our attention to the fact that God takes adequate steps to drive out selfish thoughts from the souls which are drawn to Him. "He makes the enraptured soul," he elucidates, "to flee out of herself, for she is no more satisfied with anything that can be named. The spring of Divine Love flows out of the soul and draws her out of herself into the unnamed Being into her first source, which is God alone."[17] But it would be a mistake to think that it is possible to secure divine love without a period of intense sufferings. These have been depicted in minutest details by Henry Suso. His autobiography is one of the most precious and touching documents in the history of the religion of love. In his *Book of Truth* he explains how the blessed spirits who are drawn by the Ocean of divine love are able to secure total annihilation of personality. He states: "When the good and faithful servant enters into the joy of the Lord, he is inebriated by the riches of the house of God; for he feels, in an ineffable degree, that which is felt by an inebriated man. He forgets himself, he is no longer conscious of his selfhood; he disappears and loses himself in God, and becomes one spirit with Him, as a drop of water which is drowned in a great quantity of wine. For even as such a drop disappears, taking the colour and the taste of wine, so it is with those who are in full possession of blessedness."[18] This view of complete annihilation of individuality of the soul is not shared by other medieval Christian mystics. For example, St. Bernard holds that the union between God and man is not a unity. He raises the pertinent question: "For how can there be unity where there is plurality of natures and difference of substance? The union of God and man is brought about not by confusion of natures, but by agreement of wills. Man and God, because they are not of one substance or nature, cannot be called 'one thing', but they are with strict truth called 'one spirit', if they adhere to one another by the glue of love. But this unity is effected not by coherence of essences but by concurrence of wills. God and man, because they exist and are separate with their own wills and substances, abide in one another not blended in substance but consentaneous in will."[19] The views of Henry Suso are similar to those of Bhāskara (AD 996-1061), while the opinion of St. Bernard may be compared to that of Rāmānuja and Nimbārka in some respects. It is noteworthy, however, that Rāmānuja was born some seventy-four years before St. Bernard, who was, however, forty-seven years old when Rāmānuja died in AD 1137. Suso, however, flourished some three hundred years after Bhāskara. According to Bhāskara, the individual soul becomes absolutely identical with *brahman* in respect of omniscience, omnipotence and all-pervasiveness in case of immediate release (*sadya-mukti*). But in the case of gradual release (*krama-mukti*) the freed souls at first attain only *hiraṇyagarbha* or effected *brahman* and as such they lack the power of creating, maintaining and destroying the universe. To Rāmānuja *mokṣu* does not mean the total loss of personality. In refuting the Advaita doctrine of Śaṅkara, he writes that 'release' does not mean a mere return to the substance of *brahman*, because such a return signifies complete annihilation as when an earthen vessel is refunded into clay, its causal substance. He elucidates the point by citing the example of a person suffering from pain and trying to find out the means of freeing himself from manifold afflictions so that he may enjoy a state of untroubled bliss. If he is told that the effect of such activity will be the loss of his personal existence, he will certainly desist from his efforts, because he seeks release for self-realisation and not for self-annihilation. According to Rāmānuja, the released soul experiences bliss of *sāyujya* or intimate communion, which is more intimate than *sālokya* (living in the same place), *sāmīpya* (nearness) and *svārūpya* (having the same form). Long before Rāmānuja the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* had stated that the *mukta* is attracted to *brahman* as iron to the magnet. The iron, however, does not become the magnet.[20] Rāmānuja is more definite in his commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā*. In explaining VIII.14-15 of the *Gītā* he stated that the released soul is set aflame with a passionate love for God. By the grace of God he is enabled to possess God as a lover. Though liberation is generally understood to be complete detachment, yet the liberated soul falls into an attachment more passionate than anything he had experienced before. He retains this glowing love even after fruition. In comparison to love, liberation appears as a mustard seed before mount Meru.

uja imbibed the spirit of glowing love towards God from the Āḷvār saints. Yāmunācāryā, the grandson of Nāthamuni, like Vyāsadeva collected the four thousand *prabandhas* of the Āḷvārs and divided them into four parts. He was Rāmānuja's immediate predecessor in the spiritual line. Rāmānuja was born of Kāntimatī, sister of Śrīśaila Purṇa, the grandson of Yāmunācārya. The term Āḷvār signifies a devotee sunk in the beauty and glory of his Lord. The Āḷvārs are twelve in number. The earliest of them were Poygai, Pūdam and Pey. Pūdaṁ refers to Mahabalipuram as Mallai; this name came into vogue after the middle of the seventh century. Poygai and Pey refer to Vinnahar, which was built by the Pallava king Parameśvaravarman II (AD 705-710). Thus the first three saints could not have flourished before the early part of the eighth century. Tirumaṅgai, who is regarded as the last of the Āḷvārs, lived some time between the end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth century. He is said to have belonged to the caste which has been branded as that of thieves. But he himself says that he was the ruler of Mangai of Tiruvilinad. Probably, he was a feudatory of the Pallavas. Another Āḷvār saint who hailed from the princely order was Kulaśekhara.

From his *Mukundamālā* we learn that he ruled over Kolli, the Coḷa capital, Kudal or Madura, and the Pāṇḍya capital and also over Koṅgu or Cera country. None could have become the sovereign of all the three states after AD 900, when the Coḷa king Parantaka transferred the capital from Kollior Uraiyur to Tanjore. Dr. R.G. Bhandarkar ascribed the middle of the twelfth century as the date of Kulaśekhara. This, however, is highly improbable because an inscription dated AD 1088 makes a provision for the recital of a work by Kulaśekhara. According to T. Gopinatha Rao most of the Āḷvārs flourished in the period between the middle of the seventh century and the middle of the ninth century AD. It is noteworthy that both Kulaśekhara and Ācarya Śaṅkara hailed from the same region and lived almost in the same period—one preaching absolute monism and the other emphasizing the importance of unalloyed devotion. Kulaśekhara may be called the morning star of the great *bhakti* movement which arose in the Tamil country, and thence spread over eastern, northern and western India. He is intoxicated with the love of God, and calls "everyone mad but the madmen who with tearful eyes and thrilled body, pine for Him, and sing and dance and worship Viṣṇu."[21] He avers that like a lotus that refuses to open to any warmth other than that of the sun, even if a flame were brought close to it, his soul will not melt at any influence excepting Viṣṇu's. Amongst the incarnations of Viṣṇu he offers homage to Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. He does not want to acknowledge any kinship with the world, nor desire maidens slim of waist, good food nor fine array. The burden of his song is:

> With joy and love I rise for one alone, and cry Raṅgam, my Lord![22]

With intense ardour he declares that he would prefer to be a fish in the tank of the temple, a tree in the garden of the temple, a step at the threshold of the temple to bring a king in this world or in heaven. This may be compared to the famous prayer of Uddhava to be one of the bushes, creepers, plants or herbs of Vṛndāvana, because these come in contact with the dust on the feet of those *gopīs* who abandoned their relations and resorted to the feet of the Lord.[23]

Periyāḻvār, who is said to have been the spiritual counsellor to Śrīvallabha, the Pāṇḍya king, flourished in the last half of the eighth century. He wrote 473 poems, of which more than half deal with Kṛṣṇa as a child and as a lover. Yaśodhā is full of tender affection for Kṛṣṇa. She asks the moon to respond to his call. When the moon fails to come to her child she suspects that the moon is probably childless, and therefore, does not know how to respond to the loving call of a baby. All these illustrate the loving concern of the mother for the child indeed, but unlike the Yaśodhā of the Bengal school of Vaiṣṇavism, she is conscious of the divinity of her little son and reminds the moon that the child is the same who in ancient time slept on the banyan leaf and also the same who humiliated Bālī. Compare the following poem by Abhinanda quoted by Vidyākara in his *Subhāṣita-ratna-koṣa* (no. 144).

My son, if entering the mountain caves
in guarding of the cattle you should come
upon wild beasts,
then call to mind Nārāyaṇa the primal spirit.
So spoke Yaśodhā
and I pray the smile which rose threat
but which Murāri quickly hid by
    pressure of his lips
may ever aid the world.

In this poem the poet makes Yaśodhā entirely unaware of the divinity of her son.

Periyāḷvār's foster-daughter was Āṇḍāl or Godā, who despite her being a woman came to be reckoned as an Āḷvār, because of her abounding devotion and exquisitely fine poetic compositions. She is the first historic person to imbibe the spirit of the *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana and express without any hesitation the longing for her divine lover. She asks the conch-shell which is blown by Kṛṣṇā:

Smell they of myrrh? Or do they smell of lotus flowers?
His beautiful, holy lips of coral, are they sweet?
How taste and smell the lips of him who broke the tusk
For I dearly went to know – say, white shell from the sea.[24]

She is so much lovelorn that she beseeches the God of love to take pity on her.

She prays to him: "O Lord! to thee I wish to speak a word; just for the sake of preserving my life, grant me the boon that I may touch the feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa." In her grief of separation from her beloved she cries: "Being crushed under the feet of that cruel callous son of Nandagopa in the world, bereft, I cannot stir. Fetch me the dust of the place trodden by that brazen-faced youth, and smear my body with it; for then alone my life will not depart from the body." In her poem *Tiruppāvai* she invokes cloud to pour rain but she is so full of Kṛṣṇa in her heart that she recalls her beloved at every step and compares it to him:

Darken like Kṛṣṇa's form,
Flash lightning like the sword, sound
    deep like his conch
And like his arrows shoot down drops of rain.

Āṇḍāl with the maidens accompanying her to the house of Nandagopa asserts.

Not for today alone
Have we become thy slave; but Govinda
For aye, for sevenfold births! Only to thee
We'll service give; from us do thou remove
All other loves.[25]

Nammāḷvār, born of a śūdra and known as Sadagopan or Śaṭhakopa, is referred to in the Tirukkannapuram inscription of AD 908 and as such must have flourished before the date. He refers to the Viṣṇu temples at Śivaramaṅgai and Varaguṇamaṅgai which came into existence in the second half of the eighth century. Like Āṇḍāl he identifies himself with the *gopīs* and entreats Kṛṣṇa not to go to the pasture for tending the cows. He tells the reason thereof: "Many *asuras* set up by Kaṃsa take alluring forms and wander about in thy meadows and entice thee. If they succeed many evils will come upon thee. I implore you to listen to me." (10.3.7). In another poem the saint recalls with evident delight the intimacy he enjoyed as a *gopī*; "Thou embracest us so closely that the jasmine wreath and glittering gem Kaustubha on thy breast are pressed upon me, and perfume my bosom. Thou givest the ambrosia of thy mouth and placest thy hand upon the heads of us, thy poor maids. Thou placest thy fair feet on our heads; we are thy poor maids. O beautiful Kṛṣṇa, on thy way there are many better maids to hold thy feet and serve thee in the resting places—Let that be. Our women's nature yields to thee. Our lovely eyes will not cease shedding tears. Our mind will have no rest. Therefore, thy going away to tend the cattle is unbearable to us. Our souls burn like wax in the fire."[26] Śaṭhakopa has placed this type of songs in the tenth or last book of his *Tiruvāyamoḷi*, and, therefore, the sentiment expressed here may be taken as his last goal, though in the earlier parts of the book he sings of the majesty of the Lord and of love to incarnations of Narasiṃha, Vāmana and Rāma.

Nimbārka adheres only to the worship of Gopāla Kṛṣṇa, the cowherd Kṛṣṇa, attended by his wedded consort Rādhā and engaged in playful pastimes with the *gopīs*. Rāmānuja and his followers worship Nārāyaṇa attended by Śrī or Lakṣmī. But in the Rāmānuja sect the *bhakti* or devotion is dominated by the sentiment of awe and reverence to the Lord and so it is designated as *aiśvarya-pradhāna-bhakti*. It involves the process of continuous meditation and as such is much more intellectual in character than that of the Nimbārka sect, who take pride in calling it *mādhurya-pradhāna*, where the intimate relation of love supersedes the majesty of God.

The ideal of loving relation between the deity and the devotee inspired not only the Vaiṣṇavas but also the Śaivas. Akka Mahādevī, who flourished in the Kannada country in the middle of the twelfth century and was married to a prince, wrote:

O Lord, love me if you will, love not
if you will not;
I cannot rest contented unless I hold
you in my arms.
O Lord, look at me if you will, look not
if you will not;
I cannot rest contented unless I gaze at
you in overpowering longing.

The religion of love received a new impetus from Pūrṇaprajña Ānandatīrtha, better known as Madhva Ācārya (1197-1276). To him *bhakti* was deep love of God inspired by and based on an adequate knowledge of His majesty. He defines it as 'that firm and unshakable love of God, which rises above all other ties of love and affection based upon an adequate knowledge and conviction of His great majesty. Such *bhakti* leads one to *mokṣa*, which, according to Him, is the discovery of one's own selfhood. In his *Anuvyākhyāna* (57 b) he states that *mokṣa* would not be worth having if the *ātman* does not survive as a self-luminous entity therein.

Madhva does admit that the *gopīs* are beloved of Kṛṣṇa, but he ranks them in the lowest scale. According to him the queens of Kṛṣṇa are twice as great, Yaśodā thousand times greater but Devakī, Vāsudeva and Balarāma are superior to her and Brahmā's devotion excels that of others. Lokācari Svami of the Rāmānuja sect, however, holds that the *gopīs* could realise the Lord and Brahmā could not.[27] The Bengal school of Vaiṣṇavas is considered by some as a branch of the Madhva sect; but the difference between the two is fundamental in theology, rituals and philosophic outlook.

The Bengal school, however, was nurtured and developed through three eminent sons of Karṇāṭa, the land of origin of Madhva and the movement of Haridāsakūṭa. These were Sanātana and Rūpa and their nephew Jīva. Sanātana's great grandfather migrated to Bengal at the time when the Haridāsakūṭa movement had originated. The greatest exponents of the movement were Śrīpāda Rāja, Vyāsarāya, Purandara dāsa and Kanakadāsa. The hymns and songs composed by them helped to propagate the religion of love not only in Karṇāṭa but also in neighbouring regions.

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2

The Concept of Sahaj in Guru Nanak's Theology and its Antecedents

NIHARRANJAN RAY

I

All knowledgeable Sikhs and students of Sikhism recognize that the ultimate goal which the religious and spiritual discipline laid down by Guru Nanak was supposed to lead to, was the experience of *Sahaj*. *Sahaj*, according to him, was indeed the last reach of human experience, beyond which lay the realm of formlessness and inarticulation.

What is this *Sahaj* experience, what is its nature and character? How does one achieve it, how does one recognize it?

In common with Kabir and many other *sants* (saints) of medieval India, Guru Nanak came to recognize and accept that religious and spiritual quest was a matter which was altogether internal to man. Negatively speaking, it was not a matter of external practices and observances of traditional forms and prescriptions of religion. Positively, it was a matter, first, of cleansing and purifying one's heart and mind; secondly, of filling them with an intense love for and devotion to God, the Ultimate and the Absolute, and waiting cravingly for His grace (*kirpā*, *prasād*, *dayā*, etc.); and thirdly, striving unceasingly for a complete, unalloyed and absolute blending of one's individual self or *ātmā* with the Universal Self or *paramātmā*[1] who is none other than God Himself. For each one of these stages Guru Nanak laid down certain disciplines which each individual aspirant was called upon to go through to prepare himself for the final merger or blending. An analysis of these disciplines seems to indicate that what Guru Nanak was aiming at was a transformation of the individual psyche and will by bending and directing both towards the ultimate goal of achieving the merger with the Ultimate Absolute. It was only when the soil of life was made ready that the final ascent could be made. This ascent too, was in several *khaṇḍs* or stages in spiritual progress, as Guru

Nanak described them; they were five in number, namely, *Dharam Khanḍ*, *Giān Khanḍ*, *Saram Khanḍ*, *Karam Khanḍ* and *Sach Khanḍ.*[2] Here it is not necessary to go into an explanation and analysis of these *khanḍs*; it would be enough to indicate that neither God's grace nor the merger or blending with Him was any matter of accident, happening as if in a sudden flash. To reach up to the ultimate state of *Sahaj* or absolute union, merger or blending, one had to prepare himself through a rigorous process of *sādhanā* or discipline and proceed stage by stage.

How does one recognize that one has reached the state of *Sahaj*; what is the nature and character of *Sahaj* experience?

Sach Khanḍ, the last of the five *khanḍs* or stages is the realm of Truth, the ultimate stage of human aspiration and experience in which one reaches a state of absolute blending with the Absolute, a state which is beyond words, beyond articulation and can be known only in experience. It is beyond the three *guṇas*[3]: *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*,[4] and is hence called the *chauṭhā pad*, the fourth state. It is also called the *sahaj pad*, *turia pad* or *avasthā*, that is, the supreme state, the *param pad*,[5] the absolute state, the *amarā pad*,[6] the deathless state. It is a state of absolute peace and tranquillity,[7] of changelessness since it lies beyond the cycle of birth and death,[8] and of eternal wonder and bliss;[9] it is also a state of ineffable glory and light radiating beyond the *daśam duār*[10] or the tenth door. The *Sahaj*, blending or merger is like the blending of the light of the individual with the light of God,[11] like that of a drop of water into that of the ocean.[12] It is a state of existence in which the *ātmā* of the individual is dissolved and absorbed in the *paramātmā*, and the inner duality dies within.[13] It is variously described as *suni* (*śūnya*) *samādhi*, *sahaj samādhi*, *sahaj yoga*, for instance, and the experience itself as *mahāsukh*, *param sukh*, *param ānand.* Indeed, the *Sahaj* state is not merely the Ultimate Reality, it is the Lord (*Prabhu*), the ultimate in-dwelling Beloved in whom one is merged or absorbed[14]. One who achieves this state of being is described by Guru Nanak as *jivanmukta*, and the state itself is described as that of *jīvanmukti.*

The word by which this absorption or blending or merger is characterized is a very significant one; it is either *samati* or *samaunā* as in *sahajī samati*[15], *sahajī samaunā*, *joti joti samaunā*[16] *sabadi samaunā*, *sachi samaunā*, for instance, the root verb in each case being *sam* which literally means to equalise, merge, blend, absorb, fill, pervade, unify. But from the context in which the word *samati* or *samaunā* is used it is clear that what is meant is absolute absorption, unification, merger or blending in a manner so as to leave no trace or consciousness of duality or separate identity.

Apart from the characteristics of peace and tranquillity, of wonderment and bliss and of ineffable radiance by which one recognized the *Sahaj* state of being, Guru Nanak recognized another, that of *anāhad śabad*,[17] an unstruck sound which he used to experience within himself at that ultimate state of being.

All said and done the fact remains that in whichever manner one seeks to describe the *Sahaj* experience, its real nature must elude understanding in humanly communicable language. The articulation of an experience which was essentially a mystical one and hence, according to Guru Nanak himself, was incapable of being translated in communicable terms, was indeed beyond human expression had necessarily to be in traditional mystical terms made current and somewhat understandable by his predecessors belonging to various mystic orders of *sants* ond *sādhus*, and in well-known traditional symbols and images that had some meaning, howsoever vague and generalized, to those whom his words were addressed to.

What I want to do here is to present, as faithfully and as briefly as possible, the nature and character of *Sahaj* as was sought to be articulated by Guru Nanak himself at different places of his enormous corpus of *śabads*, or *dohās* and *ślokas*. Yet it must be recognized that at the ultimate analysis the essential nature of the experience lay in the experience of the actual absorption or union itself by one who experienced it in the lineaments of his being. That Guru Nanak was convinced that one did so by his senses and mind, all physical entities, there is no scope for doubt. He is very clear, precise and definite when he says: "This body is the abode of God His palace wherein He shines in infinite rediance. By Guru's word one is ushered into the palace. There alone one comes face to face with God."[18]

Was Guru Nanak absolutely original in what he said about *Sahaj*, its nature and character? Were the terms and concepts like *Sahaj*, *anāhad sabad*, *samati* and *samaunā*, *mahāsukh*, *sahaj samādhi*, *jīvanmukti*, etc., and the nature of the description of the experience of *Sahaj* entirely his own? If not, where did he get them from? Did he accept and adopt whatever he received from his inheritance? If he did not, wherein did he differ, and how did he state his position, in the light of his own personal experience, without doubt?

A fresh attempt may be made[19] to answer these questions, as briefly and as precisely as possible. There are many points of similarity and difference and divergence between Guru Nanak on the one hand and the totality of the Indian medieval protestant and non-conformist mystic tradition and the individual mystics belonging to this tradition, on the other. Basically and in all fundamental matters these individuals and the orders they represented, beginning from about the tenth to about the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries of the Christian era, belonged to the same tradition and subscribed to the same attitudes and approaches towards religious and spiritual life in general and brahminical Hinduism, traditional Buddhism and Jainism and Indian Islam in particular, especially in regard to the behavioural pattern of the followers of the respective cults and faiths. But here I shall confine myself to one concept alone, that of *Sahaj*—its nature and character, of the Indian medieval mystics, considered individually and collectively, and try to find out answers to the questions I have put to myself in respect of this one particular concept.

II

One of the tallest of Guru Nanak's predecessors, perhaps an elder contemporary, in the line of mystic *sants* and *sādhus*, and the greatest representative of what is called the *Sant* synthesis was Kabir, and it was Kabir's way of life and thought that seems to have had the greatest impact on the life and mind of Guru Nanak; the Nāthapanthī and Kānphaṭa yogis and the leaders of the *bhakti* movement, figures like those of Rāmānand and Nāmdev, for instance, being the next formative influences on him. But in so far as the concept of *Sahaj* is concerned it would be enough if we turn to Kabir and the Nāthapanthī yogis in the first instance, and in the second, to the Sahajayānī Buddhists and their spiritual descendants, the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas and Bāuls of Bengal, since all these sects and cults came to accept *Sahaj* as the Ultimate and Absolute reality. The Sufi saints did not accept the term, but they too conceived the Ultimate Reality in terms of the Supreme Beloved just as Kabir and Dādū, even Guru Nanak, the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas and Bāuls of Bengal and other devotional sects and cults did under the impact of the *bhakti* movement. The *sants* and *sādhus* of northern India seem to have had already achieved a kind of synthesis between the *Sahaja* and Sufi ideas when Guru Nanak emerged on the scene of medieval Indian religious thought and activities. Many of the medieval *sants* and *sādhus* including Guru Nanak, indentified the Supreme Beloved who was none other than *Sahaj* itself with Rāma or Kṛṣṇa with whom they sought a personal relation of intense love. But it must be pointed out at once that the *sants* and *sādhus* including Kabir and Guru Nanak, were never tired of asserting that this Rāma or Kṛṣṇa was not any historical or even a mythological person, not any incarnation of God nor even of Rāma or Kṛṣṇa himself; indeed he had no anthropomorphic form whatsoever. As a matter of fact they conceived their Rāma or Kṛṣṇa as an indwelling principle which was the Ultimate, formless, colourless reality immanent in man; it was none other than God himself. *Sahaj* experience was indeed with them God experience itself.

Kabir characterizes the experience of *Sahaj* as the ultimate human experience of bliss and peace; he calls it *sahaj samādhi* which one can attain by finally arresting all the functions of the mind and hence by creating an absolute vacuity within. He therefore characterizes *Sahaj* as *suni* (*śūnya*) *sahaj* which he describes, just as Guru Nanak, following him, does, as a state of supreme peace and bliss, of *mahāsukha*. It was a state of absolute merger in which there was left no trace of duality. What is significant is that the term for merger or blending or union that Kabir uses is *samanā* which is the same as in Guru Nanak.[20] Speaking of *Sahaj* Kabir says:

> Everybody speaks of *Sahaj*, but nobody knows what *Sahaj* really is. *Sahaj* really is when one gives up all his desires, keeps his senses under his full control, when his son, wife, wealth and desire are all kept aside and when Kabīr becomes the maid of Rāma; that is real *Sahaj* when one is united with Rāma, that is, with the Lord, in a natural manner.[21]

It is to be noted in this connection that when Kabir speaks in terms of union or merger or blending of himself as the mind of Rāma with his only beloved Rāma himself, he is not thinking in terms of a physical union of the two physical sexes, though the imagery is one of such an union. All that he meant was the union of two principles: the Individual self, and the Universal self, both innate and immanent in man's very nature, the reason why the union was called *Sahaj*, a term which literally meant what originated with the birth of any entity (*sahajāyate iti sahaja*).

Dādū, a spiritual successor of Kabir, one of the front rank *sants* and perhaps a younger contemporary of Guru Nanak, speaks of *Sahaj* in the same strain and characterizes it more clearly and emphatically. He too, says that this is the ultimate end of all religious and spiritual quests. He too, asserts that *Sahaj*, which is *sūnya* or vacuity is the Ultimate Reality. *Sahaj* is the supreme Beloved, the Lord or *sāmi* (Sanskrit, *svāmī*), or Rāma who is none other than the formless non-dual God with whom one seeks absolute blending through intense love and devotion. This state of union, blending or merger is the state of *Sahaj* experience. "When consciousness reaches the *Sahaj* state", says Dādū, "waves of duality vanish, hot and cold become the same, everything becomes one." Elesewhere he says:

> Where there is no two, there is *Sahaj*, there joy and sorrow become one. *Sahaj* neither lives nor dies; it is the state of complete *nirvāṇa*... Amidst all duality hold your consciousness in the vacuity of *Sahaj*, and drink nectar when you have attained the final state of arrest and then there is no fear of death or of the flux of time.

In a number of *dohās* Dādū goes on speaking endlessly as if it were, of the nature and character of *Sahaj*, more or less in the same lines as Kabir does, using more or less the same images and symbols. "One's self is a tender plant wherein blooms the flower of *Sahaj*; the true *guru* teaches how to achieve it in a natural way, but very rare are the persons who can understand it." Elsewhere he says: "*Prāṇa* and *pyaṇḍa* (the vital breath and body), flesh and blood, ears and nose, all play wonderful sport in *Sahaj*."[22]

Did Kabir and Dādū, as a matter of fact, the *sants* of the Nirguna-sampradāya, speak of any yogic physiological practices as helpful and necessary for reaching the state of *Sahaj*? It is not absolutely clear that they did, to my mind. Indeed, an analysis of the *dohās* of Kabir does not show very clearly if he had a regular system of psychological and physiological discipline or yoga involving the hundred-petalled lotus, *ṣāṭ-cakra*, the control of the vital wind and the nervous system etc. as one reads of about the discipline in any authoritative tantric text. Yet we know that Kabir speaks of two channels as the tantric Haṭha-yogis do, and describe them as the moon and the sun or the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā, and a third, which together is called *Triveṇī*, the middle channel or nerve being referred to as the channel leading to *Sahaj*, to all of which he refers nevertheless. He also refers to the drinking of nectar issuing out of the nerve called the moon which is located on the Mount Meru or the spinal cord.[23] Kabir called his system *Sahaj Yoga* and the *Sahaj* experience, *Sahaj Samādhi* just as Guru Nanak does at a later date; but as one looks closely into the system and the context of the terms and symbols he uses to describe it, one does not feel absolutely convinced if Kabir had come to accept and adopt the yogic tradition of tantric Haṭha-yoga made current by the Sahajayanī Buddhists and the Nāthapanthis, for instance. Recent researches[24] have tried to prove that the leader *sants* of the Nirguṇa-sampradāya did all come to accept what is usually known as the tantric-yogic practices as an integral part of their religious and spiritual discipline, their imagination and intellect. Indeed, a comparative study of the terms, phrases, imageries and symbols, and even of the language itself of the *sants* and *sādhus* of the medieval period show a remarkable similarity between theirs on the one hand and those of the Sahajayānī Buddhists and the Nāthapanthīs, for instance, on the other.[25] In fact, some of the *dohās* of Kabir and Dādū read almost as translations or transcreations of the *padas* and *dohās* of the Buddhist Siddhācharyas. Even so, I am not absolutely certain that the tantric-yogic terms, concepts and phrases used by Kabir and Dādū, for instance, were anything more than just images and symbols, figures of speech, so to say, made use of by them since these had a symbolical meaning well understood by those to whom these words were addressed. But here I should not be dealing with Kabir or Dādū, but with Guru Nanak alone.

III

There were many elements in the *sant* tradition, in a number of other protestant and non-conformist sects and in Guru Nanak himself, which were common to the Nāthapanthīs and their predecessors, the Sahajayānī Buddhists. It is perhaps necessary to mention them here since, to my mind, they were the preconditions of the *Sahaj* experience, that is, these elements constituted the stages of preparation of the psychological precondition which led to the experience of that state of peace and bliss, happiness and radiance which was called *Sahaj*. Negatively speaking, these were (*a*) sharp criticism and rejection of all external formalities in regard to religious practices and spiritual quests, and (*b*) protest against and rejection of priestly and scriptural authority celibacy, penances, austerities and the life. Positively, the most important elements were (*a*) recognition of the *guru* is essential for any spiritual exercise and quest, (*b*) recognition of the human body as the seat and habitat of all religious and spiritual experience, indeed of the Truth or Ultimate Reality and hence rejection of any transcendental reality external to man, and finally, (*c*) recognition of the experience of the Ultimate Reality as one of inexpressible happiness and ineffable radiance, waveless equipoise, absolute peace and tranquillity, and of absolute non-duality or complete unity. The Sahajayānī Buddhists, the saintly poets of the -*Sant* tradition, Kabir and Guru Nanak knew this experience of the Ultimate Reality as *Sahaj*; indeed the *sants* and Guru Nanak seemed to have received the term and concepts as an inheritance from the Sahajayānī Buddhists who in their turn seem to have received not the term but the concept of the resolution of the duality through an absolute union of two principles, one male and another female, as well as the nature and character of the ultimate experience, from the older Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna Buddhist tradition.[26] The Sahajayānīs too, knew this experience as one of *mahāsukha*.

The Nāthapanthīs however did neither accept the term, nor the concept in its entirety, though the description of the nature and character of the ultimate experience reads more or less similar if not exactly the same. Yet the fact remains that there are yogic terms and concepts in the Nāthapanthī tradition, which were accepted and adopted by the *sants* like Kabir and Dādū as well as by Guru Nanak. This tradition therefore deserves a certain consideration.

Judging by the north Indian regional literature on the Nātha-siddha yogis and the variety of myths and legends connected with them, it would seem that the Nātha movement was at least a pan-north Indian one, and if Matsyendranātha is regarded as one of the originators of the cult its antiquity must be at least as old as that of the Sahajayāna. Apart from a general predilection towards occult practices and acquisition of supernatural powers, the Nāthasiddhas owed their religious affiliation to the Śiva-Śakti cult but their religious discipline was that of Haṭha-yoga, which was almost an article of faith with them. Yogic practices, somewhat of the nature and character of those of the Nātha yogis, were common to the Sahajayānī Buddhists and other esoteric sects, but with the Nātha yogis these were the most important means of achieving their goal while with the others these constituted only one of the disciplines. With the former it was altogether physiological while with the latter it was also a psychological discipline.

Besides, the greatest and most important difference lay in the ultimate goal itself. The ultimate objective of the Sahajayānī Buddhists, of the *sants* like Kabir and Dādū and of Guru Nanak, was the achievement of *Sahaj* experience which the Sahajayānīs identified with *mahāsukha*, but the Nātha yogi objectives was to attain the state of *jivanmukti* or immortality in life, according to their own way of life and its interpretation.

How did they propose to achieve this end? Bereft of esoteric complexities and scholastic niceties as recorded in relevant texts[27] their position may be stated, for our present purpose, as follows:

This ordinary human body is a raw, indeed a very imperfect, a most inadequate object for the achievement of *jīvanmukti*, that is, for freedom from bondage of decay and death, in other words, of immortality. But through the yogic processes of *ultā-sādhanā*, that is, by making the vital fluid flow upwards instead of downwards, which is the natural physical law, and of *kāya-sādhanā*, that is, by the disciplining of the muscles, sinews, ducts, nerves and nerve centres as well as of the mind through perfect control of the vital wind, this raw, imperfect body can be transformed first, into a *pakkva deha* or ripe body and then transubstantiated steadily into a *divya deha* or divine body, which was the only way to overcome decay, destruction and death. This disciplining of the body and the mind involved a detailed classification and analysis of the entire human physiological system so well-known in Haṭha-yoga; it also involved according to Naṭha-yogic interpretation, a number of theoretical postulates and actual physiological processes which have all been studied, analysed and described in some detail by competent scholars.[28] For our purpose, I need not go into any of these very intricate details; I need only point out that the conception of the sun and the moon identified respectively with Śakti and Śiva on the one hand and with woman and man on the other, had an important role to play in the yogic scheme of things of the Nātha yogis. The sun and moon were usually understood to stand respectively for the right and left nerve channels and their union as the union of the two channels of the vital wind. The sun is also supposed to stand for fire or heat or *agni*, and the moon for *somarasa*, the nectar essence, the former being the consumer of the latter, the two in their balanced combination constituting the principle that was supposed to sustain physical existence, the one, that is the moon, standing for creation and preservation and the other, the sun, for decay and destruction. The moon was therefore supposed to stand for Śiva and the sun for Śakti, also therefore, for man and woman respectively. The moon being the source of creation and preservation (=Śiva=man), it was supposed to hold in its bosom the *amṛta* or nectar which was otherwise called *mahārasa* (or *bindu*, the vital secretion) which the sun (Śakti=woman) was always after to consume. The Nātha, yogic aim was to save this *amṛta* from being consumed by the sun; their method of doing so was by a particular *mudrā* in their yogic practice which involved the conception of the *daśama dvāra* of the body, which was distinguished from the other ordinary doors. Since the sun was equated with Śakti (woman) who was always eager to consume the *amṛta* (*bindu*) of the moon, the Nātha yogis tried to keep away from woman as far as possible, indeed to shun them altogether, though they, in some of their yogic practices, had to use women but as mere instruments. This aversion to women is traditionally attributed to Gorakṣanātha and his disciple Carpaṭanātha, both of whom seem to have had a great sway in the Punjab.

The attitude of the *sants* like Kabir, towards women was certainly derived from and conditioned by that of the Nātha yogis. Kabir refers to women as tigresses who were always seeking men to prey upon to suck their vitality out of them. The general attitude of the other *sants* including that of Tulsidās, was not different, it seems.

IV

It is exactly here, that is, in their attitude towards women that the Sahajayānī Buddhists differed most from the Nātha yogis, as well as in another, namely, in the ultimate objective of their spiritual quest and in the general approach towards it. Yet the practical yoga discipline followed by the Sahajayānīs did not materially differ much from that of the Nāthapanthīs.

The Sahajayānī objective was not immortality in any physical sense but frankly, the peaceful, blissful, radiant, changeless and hence waveless experience of *Sahaja* which was one and the same as *mahāsukha*, the great happiness. By its very nature *Sahaja* experience was indescribable; it was essentially non-dual in character and was, in their interpretation, the Ultimate Reality.

How does one achieve this *Sahaja* objective?

The Sahajayānīs in common with all other contemporary protestant tantric yogic cults and sects, considered the human body itself as the seat of all human experience including that of *Sahaja-mahāsukha*. According to them everything lay within this human frame, nothing outside of it, and that this human body was but the microcosm of the macrocosm universe. It was therefore in the nature of things that in their religious attitude and practice the body, that is, the physical system which was generally very well-known to all tantrics, would receive great attention from them. The six nerve-plexuses or *ṣhaṭ-cakra* of yogic texts, was reduced by them to three and these three were identified with the three *kāyas* of Mahāyāna Buddhism, namely, the *Nirmāṇakāya*, the *Dharmakāya* and the *Sambhogakāya*. To these three was added a fourth, called *Vajra* or *Sahajakāya* located in the *uṣṇiṣakamala* (the *sahasrāra* of Hindu tantra) which was known also as the *mahāsukhakamala* or *mahāsukhacakra*. *Śūnyatā* and *Karuṇā*, otherwise known as *Prajñā* and *upāya*, were identified with the two nerve channels on the two sides of the spinal cord, the third channel which was the meeting channel of the other two being the most important since it was supposed to lead the *Sahaja* upwards and was called the *Avadhūti mārga* or *Avadhutikā*. The union or blending of *Śunyata* and *Karuṇā*, or in other words of *Prajñā* and *Upāya* which together constituted the Bodhicitta, in the third channel, the *Avadhūtika*, was therefore the aim of the *Kāyasādhanā* or the physical discipline of the Sahajayānīs.[29] It was along this third or middle channel, the *Avadhūtikā*, that the Bodhicitta was supposed to be raised upwards to the *uṣniaṣkamala*. But this esoteric yogic practice was not merely physiological in character; it was also supposed to have a strong psychological undertone, the union of *Śūnyatā* and *Karuṇā*, imagined as and identified respectively with the male and female principles, being one, surcharged with emotion.

Indeed, the identification of *Śūnyatā* with the male and *Karṇuā* with the female principle transformed the character of the physical discipline of yoga within the individual human body, into a kind of sexo-yogic practice, thus introducing an external element into it in the shape and form of a woman. The image and practice of *mithuna* thus became the most important element in the tantric yogic practices of the Sahajayānī Buddhists, an element which was not accepted and adopted by the Nātha yogis. Women therefore came to occupy a significant place in the Sahajayāna; indeed in the literature of the particular *yāna* she is idolised and idealised.

The nature of the union or blending is however described as having no trace whatsoever left of any external element, of duality in any sense; indeed it was characterised as *samarasa*, a state of non-dual unity, which is the same as Kabir and Dədū would characterize it. The achievement of the state was indicated by an *anāhata dhvani* or *śabda*, an unstruck sound that preceded it. The sound was supposed to be produced at the moment when the flow of the right and left nerve channels, *Śūnyatā* and *Karuṇā*, or *Prajñā* and *Upāya*, were controlled and made to flow into the third or middle one, the *Avadhutikā*, thus enabling the Bodhicitta to rise upward to the *uṣṇīṣakamala* or the *mahāsukhakamala*.[30]

V

The *śabads* of Guru Nanak as compiled in the *Ādi Granth* do not lend themselves to the spelling out of the details of the kind of tantric yogic practice that he may or may not have followed and laid down for his disciples to follow. From his use of such technical terms as *sahaj*, *daśam duār*, *samanā* or *samaunā*, *amṛt*, *anāhad sabad*, *mahāsukha*, *jīvanmukti* etc. one would tend to think that the *guru* must have accepted and adopted some kind or other of the tantric yogic practices of the Sahajayānīs, the Nāthapanthīs and the like particularly in view of the fact that his immediate predecessor in the *sant* line, Kabir too, used some of these technical terms in his *dohās* in connection with his way of religious and spiritual pursuit.

Personally I cannot agree with such a view.

It is perfectly true to say that both Kabir and Guru Nanak not only used the term *Sahaj* but also spoke of the nature and character of the experience in more or less the same terms and images as the Sahajayānī Buddhists did. It is also true that both of them shared the general tantric view of the importance of the human body as the seat and habitat of all religious and spiritual experience and that all such experience lay within, and not outside. Both of them used terms like *amṛta* in the sense of nectar of imortality, and *samarasa* or *samanā* and *samaunā* which mean the same thing, that is, experience of absolute union and blending, *anāhad sabad* or *dhvani* in the sense of unstruck sound, and *mahāsukha* and *jivanmukti* etc. in the senses in which they were understood in their times.

Kabir goes further even when he uses the imageries of Gaṅgā and Yamunā to mean the right and left nerve channels, the Triveṇī to mean the middle channel and the *satadal* or the hundred-petal lotus, the sun and the moon etc., and expresses his intense dislike of women. That he borrowed these words, phrases and images and his dislike of woman from the tantric yogic tradition, more particularly from that of the Nātha yogis, there could hardly be any doubt about. Guru Nanak does not, however, seem to be using these words, phrases and images nor does he seem to have inherited the intense dislike of women of the Nātha yogis and of Kabir.

Yet, the question remains even in respect of Kabir as to what extent these borrowings were just echoes of a tradition, just uses of words, phrases and images that had more or less common currency among heterodox, protestant and non-conformist mystic cults and sects, sort of a language that was understood by them, and that they had no actual relationship with any kind of tantric yogic practice. From the closeness of Kabir, Dādū and number of others belonging to the *Sant* tradition, with the Sahajayānī and Nāthapanthī traditions in so far as their terms and concepts, images and symbols were concerned, one may, however, for argument's sake, concede that they had adopted some kind of tantric yogic practice, perhaps of the Nātha yogi tradition.

That it was *not so* at least in respect of Guru Nanak has been the impression left on me by the records left by the Guru himself, that is, by his own words.

Let me take the words and phrases, images and symbols used by the Guru, one by one, in their respective and relevant contexts.

Guru Nanak uses the term *amṛt*, as I have already pointed out, in the sense of nectar of immortality, but nowhere do I find him using the term in the sense of *bindu* or *mahārasa* (the semen virile), that is, the vital secretion of which the moon happens to be the receptacle. Indeed, Guru Nanak does not seem to have used the images of the sun and the moon anywhere in connection with *amṛt*. Rather, to my knowledge, the use of the term is found in association with the *Nām*, the name of God, His name being the Truth. "Whatever God has made is the manifestation of His *Nām*" says the Guru. "There is nothing in creation which is not such a manifestation."[31] This *Nām* is veritably the *amṛt* (*nāmāmṛta*) the nectar of immortality, and it is in this sense and in this context that the word *amṛt* is more often than not used. Nowhere do I find any yogic meaning of the term. Guru Nanak also uses the term *mahārasa*, but nowhere in the sense in which the Sahajayānīs did; indeed, here too, he uses it in the context of *Nām* which is *mahārasa* itself.

The term *samanā* or *samaunā* is, etymologically speaking, certainly related to the *sama* or *samarasa* of the Sahajayānī Buddhists. But it is significant that *samanā* or *samaunā* is never associated with *rasa*, that is, essence or juice. This term one finds used in such contexts or associations as in *sahajī samaunā*, *sabadi samaunā*, *sachi samaunā*, *avigati samaunā*, *joti joti samaunā*[32] etc. In all these contexts and associations the clear and simple meaning of the term *samaunā* is 'union' or 'blending' which is qualified or associated with such words as *sahajī*, *sabadi*, *sachi*, *avigati* and *joti joti*, for no other reason than to articulate the nature and character of the union or blending. Nowhere does one find in this word and its image any yogic association or significance.

In common with the Sahajayānī Buddhists Guru Nanak used the term *māhasukha* to describe the nature of the experience of the *Sahaj* state of being, which may at once suggest a very close and intimate association with Sahajayānī yogic practices, especially because he also uses the phrase *sahaj yoga* in this context. But here too, one must take into consideration the fact that he uses the term *mahāsukha* not in its technical tantric yogic meaning but synonymously with *paramsukha* and *param ānand*, that is, in its literal sense of supreme pleasure, supreme joy and bliss. A technical term is not interchangeable, but Guru Nanak seems to have admitted the interchangeability of *mahāsukha* with *paramsukha* and *param ānand*, and by and through this simple means he seems to have divested the term and concept of *mahāsukha* of all its exclusive tantric yogic significance.

Guru Nanak also uses the term and concept of *jīvanmukti* as I have already pointed out. But here too, if one has to go by the context, he seems to have used the term in its literal sense of liberation from bondage in one's temporal existence and not in the technical tantric sense in which the Nāthapanthīs used the term. Indeed, with the latter *jīvanmukti* which they interpreted in terms of immortality, was the ultimate objective of their spiritual pursuits while with Guru Nanak *jīvanmukti* was but another name of what was the *Sahaj* state of experience. Besides, it only shows that the nature and character of the ultimate experience were similar, perhaps even the same, but it is no evidence of the process or discipline being the same or even similar, that is,of Guru Nanak's *jīvanmukti* having to do anything with the tantric yogic practices of the Nāthapanthīs. Here too it seems to have been with him a meaningful phrase and nothing more.

Much more significant are the two terms and phrases *anāhad sabad* and *daśam duār*, both being technical in their use and traditional association with esoteric yogic practices. Guru Nanak seems to have derived both the components from the Nātha yogis and Kabir but he seems to differ from both in regard to their meaning and use. Kabir uses the term *śabad* (literally, sound) by itself in the sense of the word of God, just as Guru Nanak does at a later date, but when Kabir uses the term in association with *anāhad* as in *anāhad sabad,* he does so, very closely it seems, with what the Nātha yogis did, though in the utterances of Kabir it is by no means absolutely clear that it had any yogic significance.

That in Guru Nanak's case the phrase had no tantric esoteric yogic significance whatsoever, is more than clear. Let me quote a significant passage from the Guru wherein the component *anāhad sabad* (unstruck sound) has been used.

> Throwing one's doubts aside when one meets the Guru (God), one can experience one's inner being. Prepare yourself even when you are alive for the place where you are destined to go when you die. . . .Through meditation on the Guru one hears the melodious *anāhad śabad.* When, one hears it, his *haumai* (or ego or self) is destroyed. . .[33]

Wherever this phrase occurs it is always in such contexts that it does, especially so when the Guru is addressing his words to the tantric yogis as if he was giving altogether a new twist or interpretation to the component by using the same as they were so familiar with. In all such passages *anāhad śabad* is just a phrase which was being used not to indicate any tantric yogic experience, but one which could not be articulated in communicable language, in other words, which was inexpressible except in mystical but otherwise well-known phrases and images. In any case, in whatever context the component occurs, one does not seem to find any indication of any yogic association.

The same holds good in respect of the component *daśam duār*, the tenth door, one which occurs in a number of places.[34] But in each particular case all that the phrase signifies is that it is the tenth or last door to cross before one can attain to the state of *Sahaj* experience, the door having no tantric yogic significance. The component which was admittedly a tantric yogic one in its origin seems to have been used by the Guru more as an image, a symbol which had a meaning for those alone to whom his words were being addressed. Indeed, all such tantric yogic technical terms and concepts that Guru Nanak makes use of, including that of *Sahaj*, seem to have been, for him at any rate, nothing more than just a convenient means of communicating an idea of a mystical experience which was otherwise incommunicable. Terms and concepts like *anāhad śabad* and *daśam duār* or even *Sahaj* as Guru Nanak makes use of, or Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Triveṇī, the sun and the moon, the hundred-petalled lotus etc. as Kabir does, were admittedly of earlier tantric yogic origin and association, but with the *sants* of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and perhaps with the Āuls and Bāuls of contemporary and later days (not with the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas), these terms and concepts had become nothing more than figures of speech, with the potency and meaning of powerful images and symbols, but without any active association with the tantric yogic practices of either the Sahajayānīs or the Nātha yogis or any other tantric cult and sect. Rabindranath Tagore in the twentieth century made use of many of these images, symbols and figures of speech; it would be idle to speculate that he was a practitioner of Haṭha-yoga.

Reading closely through the utterances of Guru Nanak as compiled in the *Ādi Granth*, I do not find anywhere any evidence of his being a practitioner of Haṭha-yoga or any other kind of tantric yoga, nor does he seem to have prescribed for his followers any such practices. Yet he was certainly a yogi in the best and most perfect sense of the term, but his yoga or discipline was not a physiological one in the tantric yogic sense; it lay altogether in the disciplining of the mind and the senses through their concentration in meditation directed towards God, the Ultimate Reality. Indeed, he seems to have laid down a systematic process for the purpose.

Basic in this discipline was the conquest of the mind. "Conquering the world is but the conquest of the mind", says the Guru. The preparation for this conquest lay along the path of meditation of and concentration on God, and destruction or effacement of *haumai*, that is, of the self or ego. God revealed himself in, indeed He was the *Sabad* or the world, He was the *Nām* or the name, the Guru, the *hukam* or the divine order, the *Sach*, the truth. It is these as an unity that one must concentrate and meditate upon. God-experience is an inner experience; one must therefore cleanse and purify one's inner being. How does one do it? Guru Nanak's clear answer is, by loving devotion to and adoration of God,[36] and by endless repetition and remembering of His Name, *Nām Simaran*.[37] Filled by love for Him, saturated by His Name, enveloped by Him one reaches the state of *visamād*, of awe and wonder at the vision of the greatness of God.[38] Then begins the ascent towards the Ultimate Reality through the five *khaṇḍs* or stages, stage by stage, until one reaches the *Sahaj* state of mystic experience which is the Ultimate Reality itself.[39] These stages are not mutually exclusive nor are they one after the other in an ascending order; indeed they seem to be simultaneous.

Here there is nowhere the slightest trace of any kind of tantric yogic practice. What there is, is a religious and spiritual discipline or yoga of the simplest and yet the most difficult kind, a discipline of self-purification, of love and devotion, of concentration and meditation on God, the one and the only Ultimate Reality, without a second.

By laying down this discipline and this objective Guru Nanak saved the medieval Indian societies and religions from decay and disintegration and gave back to that world a much purer form of religious and spiritual quest. The leaders of the *bhakti* movement and men like Kabir, the greatest spokesman of the *sant* synthesis, also tried to do the same and succeeded in doing so to a very great extent. But the former, that is, the Bhaktimārgis, by bringing in the theory and concept of *avatāra* or incarnation of the Supreme Reality and those of Rādhā, and hence elements external to man, compromised the transparent and undiluted unitariness of God and of the essential importance of the human being itself. The latter, that is, Kabir, Dādū and others followed the Nātha-yogi tradition and inheritance so closely as to cloud and mystify man's vision of the Supreme Reality who, it seems, never comes out clearly, vividly and unequivocally from their utterances. Guru Nanak's position and statements are precise, clear and unequivocal and their ethical import and socio-religious significance deep and wide.

REFERENCES

Note: All references to the *Ādi Granth* are from the standard text of *Sābadārath Śrī Guru Granth Sahib Ji*, and follow its pagination.

[1] *Dhanāsarī* 4, *Ādi Granth*, p. 661.

[2] *Japjī*, 34-37, *Ādi Granth*, pp. 7-8.

[3] *Dhanāsari Aṣhṭapadī* I, *Ādi Granth*, p. 688; *Bilāvalu Thitī*, p. 840.

[4] *Gaurī* 12; *Ādi Granth*, p. 154; *Āsā* 22; p. 356.

[5] *Siddh Goshṭī*. Pauri 24, *Ādi Granth*, p. 940; *Prabhātī* 14, p. 1931.

[6] *Tilang* 1, *Ādi Granth*, p. 725.

[7] *Tukhari Chhant* 2, *Ādi Granth*, p. 1110; *Tilang* I, p. 725; *Gauri* 10, p. 154; *Sārang* 2, p. 1197; *Sūhi Ashṭapadī* 2, p. 751; *Sūhi Chhant* 5, p. 766; *Āsā Ashṭ*, 7, p. 414; *Bilāvalu Ashṭ* 2, p. 832; *Mārū Solahā* 20, p. 1040.

[8] *Tukhāri Chhant* 2, *Ādi Granth*, p. 1110; *Sūhi* 4, p. 729.

[9] *Mārū Solahā* 15, *Ādi Granth*, p. 1036; *Malār* 5, p. 1256.

[10] *Gaurī Ashṭapadī* 15, *Ādi Granth*, p. 227; *Ramakalī Ashṭ* 3, pp. 903-4; *Mārū Solahā* 13, 16, 19, 20, *Ādi Granth*, pp. 1033-40.

[11] *Tukhāri Chhant* 5, *Ādi Granth*, p. 1112.

[12] *Siri Rāgu* 22, *Ādi Granth*, p. 22.

[13] *Dhanāsarī* 4, *Ādi Granth*, p. 661.

[14] "Jakai antar basai prabhu api nānak le jan sahaji samāti" *Anthology of Nānak's Poems*, ed. by Pritam Singh, Amritsar edn. p. 367.

[15] cf. fn. 14.

[16] *Tukhāri Chhant* 5, *Ādi Granth*, p. 1112.

[17] *Siri Rāgu* 18, *Ādi Granth*, p. 21; *Āsā Chhant* 2, p. 436.

[18] *Malār* 5, *Ādi Granth*, p. 1256.

[19] To my knowledge the best and most comprehensive attempt in this direction was made by my late friend and colleague, Professor Sasibhusan Dasgupta in his two publications: *Obscure Religious Cults* and *An Introduction to Tantric Buddhism*. A somewhat partial attempt was made by P.D. Barthwal in his *The Nirguṇa School of Hindi Poetry*. But neither Dasgupta nor Barthwal dealt specifically with Guru Nanak though both referred to him somewhat casually as one in the total milieu of medieval Indian mystical and obsure cults informed or uninformed by *bhakti*.

[20] Syamsundar Das, ed. *Kabīr Granthāvalī* (Hindi), Nagari Pracharini Granthmālā, pp. 89, 109, 111, 137, 138, 159, 199, 269, 316 and 318.

[21] Ibid., pp. 41-42.

[22] Kshitimohan Sen, ed. *Dādū* (Bengali), Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, pp. 259, 313, 347, 382-84, 416, 422, 459, 461, 484 and 596.

[23] *Kabīr Granthāvalī*, pp. 88, 90, 91, 94, 98, 110, 146.

[24] P.D. Barthwal, *The Nirguṇa School of Hindi Poetry*, chap. 3; Mohan Singh, *Gorakhnath and Medieval Hindu Mysticism* (verses of Benī, Nāmdev, Carapati, and Guru Nanak reproduced as appendix).

[25] Sasibhushan Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, pp. 360-66.

[26] Ibid., pp. 14-50.

[27] Ibid., chaps. 8 and 9 where all these texts and the yogic system of the Nātha-yogis have been fully analysed and explained.

[28] Ibid., p. 27. Also, Sasibhushan Dasgupta, *An Introduction to Tantric Buddhism*; Herbert V. Guenther, *Yugnaddha: or the Tantric View of Life*; Kalyani Mallik, *Nāthasampradāyer Itihās, Darśan O Sādhanpraṇālī* (Bengali); Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, *Nāthasampradāya* (Hindi).

[29] Sasibhushan Dasgupta, op. cit., pp. 77-86, 87-109.

[30] Ibid., p. 98.

[31] *Japji* 19, *Ādi Granth*, p. 4.

[32] cf. fns. 15 and 16.

[33] *Siri Rāgu* 18, *Ādi Granth*, p. 21.

[34] *Mārū Solahā* 13 (1), 16(2), 19(4), 20(2), *Ādi Granth*, pp. 1033-40; *Gaurī Asht* 15, p. 227; *Rāmakalī Asht* 3, pp. 903-4.

[35] *Japji* 28, *Ādi Granth*, p. 6.

[36] *Gujāri Asht* 5, *Ādi Granth*, p. 505, for instance.

[37] cf. fn 26; *Siddh Goshṭī* 32-33, *Ādi Granth*, p. 941, for instance.

[38] *Japjī* 24, *Ādi Granth*, p. 5.

[39] Besides the *Ādi Granth* which is the only original source I have gone into, I am deeply indebted to two secondary sources: Sasibhushan Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*; W.H. Mcleod, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*.

3

Guru Nanak's Concept of God

G.S. CHHABRA

The religion founded by Guru Nanak, and further expounded and carried from place to place by his successors cannot boast of a complicated concept of God.

The scripture to the Sikhs starts with the numeral 1 which precedes the word *Om* and is pronounced as *Oangkar*. It means God and the numeral qualifying it leads to the meaning: there is but one God. According to some 1 signifies unit. Even if this be so it would lead to meaning that God is a unit, and from out of it everything emanates.

After having established the principles of the unity of God the scripture proceeds to give His attributes. The next word thus is *satnam* which means that if you want to name Him you may call Him *sat*, or 'truth'. The next word is *kartāpurakh*, meaning He is the 'creator'. This word seems to have raised lot of confusion in some minds. At the first sight the word *kartāpurakh* leads one to conclude as if Guru Nanak believed in a God who has no connection with the universe except that sitting somewhere in the heaven he creates it as an artisan manufactures an article, and then destroys it when he so desires. But this is wrong. Those who have not studied these first words of the scripture and have come across some such words in its body as:[1] "Why worship the second who takes birth and dies; worship the one, O Nanak, who pervades the waters and the lands", would come to the conclusion that the God has been identified with the creation itself. But this is wrong. Guru Nanak's concept of God is in fact neither purely of theism nor of pantheism. Actually what his philosophy regarding God means is that God is One, the Creator, and He creates everything out of His own self. Says Griffin: "In the same way as Darwin has taught the evolution of species so did the doctrine of Nanak proclaim, not the creation of Nature by the All-powerful out of nothing, but the infinite division of His own essence into a plurality of form."[2] Thus though the creation is God himself, yet it is different from God, and as Bhai Jodh Singh writes: "When this is destroyed, the phenomenon as a separate existence ceases, but God still is there."[3] Guru Arjan brings out the thing clearly in his *Jaitsri*:

> O give me, give me some intelligence of my Beloved.
> I am bewildered at the different accounts I am given of Him.
> Some say He is altogether outside the world;
> Others assert that He is altogether contained in it.
> His colour cannot be seen; nor can His features be distinguished;
> O happy wives, tell me truly—
> He dwelleth in everything; He livest in every heart;
> Yet He is not blended with anything; He is distinct.[4]

And again Guru Teg Bahadur writes in the *Dhanasri*:

> Why dost thou go to the forest in search of Him.
> He dwelleth in everything, yet he is ever distinct; He abideth in thee as well.
> As fragrance is in a flower, or reflection in a mirror,
> So doest God dwell inside everything; seek Him therefore in thy heart.[5]

In brief, Teja Singh writes: "the Gurus have combined the Aryan idea of immanence with the Semitic idea of transcendence, without taking away anything from the unity and the personal character of God."[6]

To come back to the first passage of the *Granth* written by Guru Nanak, the next word in it, as we are discussing, is *nirbhow* and then *nirwair*, which mean He is fearless and is enemy of none; or that He is just. He is *akalmurat* and *ajuni*, or that He never dies, nor does He undergo transmigration. The next word *saibhang*, is again potent of its significance. It means He is self-made. At another place in the *Japji* the first passage of which we are discussing, we come across the verse: *He cannot be set up, nor can he be created, He is self-existent and pure.*[7] Or in other words it means, He cannot be set up in the temples or other places of worship with due ceremonies. The word *saibhang* thus condemns the practice of idol-worship among the Hindus.

Besides the attributes given above, the Sikh scripture has at several places many other attributes to give to Him. The God of

Guru Nanak thus is formless, yet He can be seen clearly.[8]

"He is love and pervades here and there in the four quarters and the four corners in the form of love."[9]

Thus writes Cunningham: "Instead of circumscribed divinity, the anthropomorphous God of Ramanand and Kabir, he loftily invokes the Lord as the one, the sole, the timeless being; the creator, the self-existent, the incomprehensible, and the everlasting."[10] And writes Frederic Pincot: "For Nanak there was no such thing as a God for the Hindus, a God for the Mohammedans, and a god or gods for the other heathen; for him there was but one God, not in the likeness of man, like Rāma, not a creature of attributes and passions, like the Allah of Mohammad; but one sole, indivisible, self-existence, incomprehensible timeless, all prevading—to be named, but otherwise indescribable and altogether lovely. Such was Nanak's idea of the Creator and Sustainer of the phenomenal world, and it was a concept which at once abrogated all petty distinctions of creed, and sect, and dogma, and ceremony. The realisation of such a God shatters the sophistries of the theologians and the quibblings of the dialecticians, it clears the brow from the gloom of abstruse pondering over trifles, and leaves the heart free for the exercise of human sympathies."[11]

Dr Trumpp views that Guru Nanak did not forbid "the worship of other Gods on the ground of the unity of the Supreme."[12] But Guru Nanak writes at one place: "A hundred thousands of Mohamads, a million of Brahmās, Viṣṇus, and a hundred thousand Rāmas stand at the gate of the Most High. These all perish. God alone is immortal."[13] This means that the worship of all, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Brahmā, Rāma and like has been condemned by Guru Nanak and Dr Trumpp stands contradicted. But the problem is not solved. Because if Guru Nanak had condemned the worship of these different gods, as persons like Teja Singh in their anxiousness to prove Guru Nanak a revolutionary assert, how could the hymns of Jayadeva, the worshipper of Kṛṣṇa, or Rāmānand the worshipper of Viṣṇu, and the hymns of other such *bhaktas* be included in the *Granth* by the later Gurus? Macauliffe forwards his views in this connection. In his opinion it was to enable the readers to have the idea of historical development of Sikh reformation, thus the hymns of these *bhaktas* were included.[14] But this seems to be an effort of putting a modern idea into Guru Arjan's mind, who compiled the *Granth*. Moreover the *Granth* being the embodiment of the Sikh Gurus and occupying rather such high place as to make the Gurus themselves give it a seat higher than theirs, it is difficult to believe that even a sentence should have been included which was opposed to the teachings of Guru Nanak. At another place Macauliffe gives a further explanation of his views: "The Hindu Bhagats for the most part began life as worshippers of idols, but by study and contemplation arrived at a system of monotheism which was appreciated by Guru Arjan."[15] Nāmadeva, thus according to Macauliffe, was an idolatrous in his boyhood, condemned Hindu superstitions at manhood and began to conform to the Sikh ideas in his old age.[16] But this also does not seem to explain the position. The correct position seems to be that Guru Arjan while compiling the *Granth*, was concerned with the spirit of devotion and self-surrender in the philosophy of the *bhaktas*. If the idea behind the object of the worship was not narrow-minded, it mattered little whether one worshipped one divinity or another. In this connection Nāmadeva's verses in *rāga* Mali Gaura are revealing. In these verses while in the beginning one may call Nāmadeva an idolatorous, as one proceeds onward, one is bound to correct one's view and reach the inevitable conclusion that Nāmadeva worshipped only the omnipresent Lord and he suffered from no narrow idolatory at all.[17]

God of the Sikh Gurus is all-pervading and omnipresent. He is the one who Himself is the creator and Himself the created.[18] And if this is so it matters little whether one worships Him in one form or another, for in such a situation, as Guru Arjan writes: "He Himself is the Gopi, Himself the Kṛṣṇa, Himself He grazeth the cows in the forest."[19] Whatever form one worships, one can worship none but Him provided one's attitude behind all this is correct. How to obtain Him?

Bhai Khan Singh quotes in his book *Ham Hindu Nahin*,[20] a verse from Guru Nanak's hymns to prove that the Guru rejected the Hindu sacred books as useless to help in attaining God. There are indeed many more verses written by other Gurus and *bhaktas* which could be construed to mean what Bhai Khan Singh has brought Guru Nanak's verse to imply.[21] Kabir thus writes:

> What availeth thee to read the Vedas and Purāṇas?
> It is like loading a donkey with sandal whose perfume he valueth not.[22]

But to give to such verses the interpretation that Bhai Khan Singh has given, seems difficult to understand. Because Guru Nanak himself writes at one place:

> The four books and the four Vedas, which were promulgated in the world.
> Came down from high under the orders of the Lord God.[23]

And Kabir at another place clearly writes:

> The words of the sacred texts are as seas of milk:
> For that ocean let the Guru be the churning staff.
> So thou the churner of that milk;
> Why shouldst thou be despoiled of thy butter[24]

The fact seems to be that Guru Nanak condemned scripturalism,[25] not scriptures. There is no doubt that the real significance of these sacred books have been forgotten when the *bhakti* reformers organised their movement. A mere reading of the sacred books was supposed to be a merit high enough to get one salvation. But this was all condemned by Guru Nanak according to whom God could not be obtained without meditating and actually working on what these sacred books said.

Just as God cannot be attained by mere reading of the Vedas, similarly there is no need of going about on pilgrimages to obtain him. Thus Guru Nanak writes:

> The Ganges, the Jamna, the meeting of these rivers at Triveni, Prayag, the seven oceans. Alms, charity, and worship are all contained in God's name. I recognize Him as the One God in every age. Nanak, in the month of Māgh, if I repeat God's name with great delight, I bathe at the sixty-eight places of pilgrimage.[26]

Here Dr Banerjee seems to have taken considerable pains by forwarding several arguments to prove that the Guru in fact "had nothing to say against charity, penance, or pilgrimage as such but denounced them as he found them in actual practice. He attacked the perversion, not the customs themselves."[27] While we might have nothing to say against him up to this point, it looks difficult for us to understand the necessity which compelled him after conceding that Guru Amar Das's visit at Kurukṣetra, the Jamuna and the Ganges might have been undertaken to preach his teachings rather than as a pilgrim to assert on the authority of Guru Gobind Singh that Guru Teg Bahadur did believe in going on pilgrimages because as according to Guru Gobind Singh, when he came to Prayag, "he passed his days in charity and other meritorious acts."[28] If Guru Amar Das's visit to these places was not a pilgrimage, the mere fact that Guru Teg Bahadur passed his days in charity at Prayag could not be construed to mean that he had gone there for the sake of a pilgrimage. His purpose also might have been to preach at Prayag the gospel of Guru Nanak. But as it was his practice that wherever he went he performed meditations and did charitable acts, he might have done so at Prayag as well, especially so because the place was generally visited by a great number of beggars and other poor people.

Any way, there seems to be no doubt in the fact, as Dr Banerjee agrees, that in the teachings of Guru Nanak pilgrimage as a means of obtaining God occupies very insignificant place, if it does occupy some, at all.

The idol-worship was also condemned as a means of obtaining God. Idols might be an aid in developing one's power of concentration after which one might expand one's vision to realise God as formless and omnipresent, but if their worship is taken as an end in itself and not as a means, the purpose is defeated. In this manner God was imprisoned in the temples outside of which one could commit any crime but inside where God in the shape of idol lives, one must have an attitude of reverence and morality. There is no doubt thus that the idols had in this manner failed to serve their purpose, so far as the general mass of the people were concerned, and therefore their worship was condemned by Guru Nanak, to which we have already referred above. Kabir also condemned idol worship in his characteristic humorous manner saying that if God could be obtained by worshipping stones, he would worship mountains.[29] Guru Arjan says in the *Suhi Rāg*:

> The stone which man calls God,
> Takes him and drowns him along with it.[30]

Nor can God be obtained by ritualism and rites, as Guru Nanak said:

> To give a feast, make a burnt offering, offer alms,
> perform penance and worship, and endure bodily pain
> for ever are all of no avail. Without God's name salvation
> is not obtained; the holy man obtaineth it by the Name.[31]

God can be obtained through *bhakti*, which involves constant absorption in the name, in the Lord of Love. *Nām japna* or *simrna* which has so scoffingly been translated by Trumpp as "muttering of God's name",[32] involves in fact an eightfold exercise, as explained at several places in the *Granth*. This is (1) purity of mind and body. (2) Meditation on the meaning of a hymn. (3) Keeping silent. (4) Conforming one's life and deeds to the sense of the hymns, or good action. (5) Concentration of mind. (6) Contentment and patience. (7) Faith and reverence in intellect. And finally, (8) *satsang* or company of holy men. Mere mechanical or exhibitional repetition of *nām* or *simran* will bring no good results. The *simran* may be vocal or silent, but it must involve mind internally like the background music in a theatre so that there is a sense of oneness with God. This in turn leads one to *samādhi*, or the ecstatic state which is a *Janamsakhi*, has been described as follows:

> In the blessed State of 'Nām'
> When the self is lost to us,
> We cease to think, we do not think,
> No thought of pleasure, pain or grief,
> Hopes and fears cease to be;
> Silence deep, no sense of self,
> The self is merged in the greater Self,
> The little self is lost to view,
> And is merged in boundless Bliss.
> We rise above self-consciousness,
> No feeling then of 'I amness',
> Nor of heaven, nor of earth,
> Nor of any thinking thought.
> Oneness only with the One,
> Wedlock of the Soul and God.[33]

Some of the points of the eightfold exercise may here be explained. *Satsang*, or the company of holy men as a point of exercise for obtaining God has played a very significant role in the history of the Sikhs. The *satsang* has manifold advantages, as the Guru remarked: "The advantages of assembling together I cannot enumerate."[34] The company of holy men besides being an aid in the ripening of one's spiritual thoughts, helps one in the social and organisational field as well.

Another point of exercise, i.e. conforming one's life and deeds to the sense of hymns, or good action, has also been laid considerable stress upon. Guru Nanak thus says: "God places salvation in good works and uprightness of conduct."[35] This importance of good action in one's life has led Payne to remark: "In the doctrines of Nanak morality holds a higher place than in those of many other Hindu reformers . . . . Loyalty, chastity, honesty, justice, mercy, charity, and temperance are among the virtues on which vital stress is laid; while evil speaking, covetousness, anger, selfishness, extravagance, and cruelty are denounced with equal vigour. The daily practice of cleanliness, of almsgiving, and of abstinence from animal food is strictly enjoyed."[36] But this stress on good action must not in any way be interpreted to mean that good action without the knowledge of God will suffice. "Good actions were nothing in themselves," writes Latif, "but the knowledge of the true God was the only way to salvation."[37] One's actions must be inspired by an intense desire to please God and to serve fellow-men, as Guru Arjan writes in *Gauri Mālā:*

> Without pleasing God all actions are worthless.
> Repetition of *mantras*, austerities, set ways of living, or deeds of merit leave us destitute even before our journey ends.
> You won't get even half a copper, for your fasts and special programmes of life.
> These things, O brother, won't do there, for the requirements of that way are different.[38]

But despite doing all this, one can obtain God only if God himself is pleased to grant His *darśan.* After making all his efforts, as Guru Nanak writes, "If it pleases God man crosses the terrible ocean."[39]

The will of God in fact is given so much importance that even meditation on Him and repetition of his name can be only if it pleases Him. This means as if man is quite helpless, and right or wrong whatever he does, he does it only under the will of God.

Archer also has been led to write: "there is a touch of fatalism every now and then in Nanak's gospel."[40] But further he says that Guru Nanak's God is benevolent, and He is ever-ready to grant one an opportunity for good action, only if one is sincere enough to have it. Here one gets an echo of *Gītā's* philosophy where Kṛṣṇa says: "To those who are ever devoted and worship me with love, I give that knowledge by which they may attain me."

Guru Nanak teaches one a complete self-surrender, as he says: "*Surrender thyself, so mayst thou meet the Lord.*"[41] Dr Trumpp has concluded from this that in a religion where highest object of life is the extinction of individual existence, there can be no room for a system of moral duties."[42] There could however be nothing more absurd than this. To deny that one of the greatest objects of the Sikh Guru's teaching was the high principles of morality is to act as a blind man. In fact numerous quotations could be given from the *Granth* where nothing but high principles of morality have been taught. Moreover self-surrender too has here been simply misinterpreted. The relation between man and God as described at different places, should be as it is between bride and her bridegroom. Guru Nanak writes:

> She is decorated with the Guru's word; her body and soul are with her Beloved.
> With hands clasped she standeth waiting on Him, and offereth
> Him true supplication.
> She is imbued with love of her Darling: She dweleth in feet of
> True One; and, when dyed with His love, her colour is the true one.
> She is called the handmaiden of the Beloved, and answereth to the name of Lali.[43]
> Her true affection is not sundered: the True One blendeth her with Himself.[44]

And just as a faithful bride gets supreme pleasure in her complete surrender to her virtuous husband, a man gets supreme bliss by surrendering himself to God. Self-surrender to God here in fact means nothing more than a suppression of the earthly cravings.

The Guru teaches the killing of ego for those who desire to obtain Him. He writes: "Throw down thy heap of terrible egoism in the company of the saints; so that thou might find rest, abide in peace and blest with the sight of God."

Renunciation of the world has no place in the teachings of Guru Nanak. One is to live as a householder and live pure amidst impurities of the world. He says: "He alone will know the path who earns what he eats and gives a portion of it to others."[45] And one has to kill in himself the sexual attraction, anger, covetousness, affection with attachment and arrogrance to introduce purity into one's life.

REFERENCES

[1] M.A. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors*, vol. I, p. 102.

[2] Griffin, *Ranjit Singh*, p. 55.

[3] Bhai Jodh Singh, *Some Studies in Sikhism*, p. 10.

[4] *Ādi Granth*, Rāg Jaitsri, Macauliffe, op. cit., vol. V.

[5] Ibid., Rāg Dhānasari; Macauliffe, op. cit., vol. IX, p. 1.

[6] Teja Singh, *Sikhism*, p. 3.

[7] See Sewaram Singh, *The Divine Master*, p. 238.

[8] Macauliffe, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 30, 154.

[9] Gopal Singh, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, III, pp. 58, 817, 818.

[10] J D. Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*, p. 38.

[11] Frederic Pincot, his essay on 'Sikhism' in the *Religious Systems of the World*.

[12] Trumpp, *Ādi Granth*.

[13] Macauliffe, op. cit., vol. I, p. 121.

[14] See Macauliffe, op. cit., vol. I, Preface.

[15] Ibid., vol. VI, p. 1.

[16] Ibid., p. 40.

[17] *Ādi Granth*, Rāg Mali Gaura: The word of Namdevji, p. 988.

[18] Guru Arjan writes at one place thus:
Himself the Lord created the creation:
Himself, He is imbued with it.
Himself He becomes the One: Himself He becometh many coloured.
Himself He pervadeth all: Himself is He above and beyond all.
Himself He maketh us see His Presence: Himself He removeth Himself far.
Himself He becometh manifest: Himself is He unmanifest."
See *Granth Sahib*, IV, p. 923 – Var Ramkali; Macauliffe, op. cit, vol. V.

[19] See *Granth Sahib*, IV, p. 1034 – Maru Solhas; Macauliffe, op. cit., vol. V.

[20] Bhai Khan Singh, *Ham Hindu Nahin*, p. 60.

[21] See for instance *Ādi Granth*, Rāg Maru: Ashtapadis, Macauliffe, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 1008-9.

[22] Rāg Sorath, Kabirji, p. 655. Macauliffe, op. cit., vol. VI, p. 219. At another place Kabir remarks:
Why dost thou utter the Smṛtis before the dogs?

Why praisest thou the Lord before the worshippers of Maya Utter thou the Name of Rāma, and merge in Him.

Ādi Granth, Kabir, Asa Iktukas, *Granth Sahib*, II, p. 475. See also *Bibhās Prabhātī* of Kabirji, *Granth Sahib*, IV p. 285.

[23] Macauliffe, op. cit. vol. VI, p. 247, also *Ādi Granth*, Bilawal, Macauliffe, op. cit., vol. I: Thitti, p. 839, Rāg Ramkali, Macauliffe, op. cit., vol. I, p. 886.

[24] *Ādi Granth*, Asa, Macauliffe, op. cit., vol. I, War with *ślokas* of Macauliffe, op. cit., vol. I, p. 467.

[25] Mere scripturalism is in fact condemned in the Hindu scriptures themselves. *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* thus writes (s.u., part 5) "Of what use is the *Ṛgveda* to one who does not know the spirit from whom the *Ṛgveda* comes, and in whom all things abide?" Again the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, part 2, says "Not through much learning is Ātman reached, not through the intellect and sacred teachings."

See further, Juna Mascaro, *The Upanishads*, pp. 60, 91.

[26] Macauliffe, op. cit., vol. I, p. 144, Kabir humorously remarks, if God be attained by bathing alone, frogs would be emancipated, for they bathe continually. *Adi Granth*, p. 384.

[27] I.B. Banerjee, *Evolution of the Khalsa*, p. 130.

[28] *Bachitra Natak*: The actual words of Guru Govind Singh are *jab hi jat Tribeni bhae punndan din karat bitae*.

[29] See *Granth Sahib*, vol. I, p. 314.

[30] Harbans Singh, *The Message of Sikhism*; Macauliffe, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 336, 339, 372.

[31] Macauliffe, op. cit., vol. I, p. 370.

[32] See Trumpp, op. cit., p. lxxii.

[33] Balwant Singh, *Spokesman Weekly*, 16th Dec. 1957.

[34] See Macauliffe, op. cit., vol. I, p. 178; III, pp. 218-21.

[35] Ibid., vol. I, pp. 124-28.

[36] Payne, *A Short History of the Sikhs*, p. 27.

[37] Latif, op. cit., p. 247.

[38] Teja Singh, *Sikhism*, p. 6.

[39] See Macauliffe, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 78, 87, 145.

[40] Archer, *The Sikhs*.

[41] See Macauliffe, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 248, 262, 263, 289.

[42] Trumpp, op. cit., p. lxxvii.

[43] The jewel or precious one.

[44] Macauliffe, op. cit., p. 268.

[45] See *Granth Sahib*, vol. II, pp. 460-500.

4

Guru Nanak and the Bhakti Movement: Convergence and Divergence

MANORAMA KOHLI

I

Medieval India, it is argued, experienced a general wave of socio-religious protest something like Europe had experienced under the influence of Calvin and Luther.[1] Beginning from the south under the inspiration of the reformers, mystics and poets, a wave of reform swept throughout India. Its exponents in the north were Rāmānanda and his followers, in the west Nāmadeva and in the east Śaṅkaradeva, Caitanyadeva and others. This has often been called the *bhakti* movement, for the authors of this wave sought to bring the desirous change through love and devotion to the Almighty. In the Punjab it was Guru Nanak and his slightly older contemporary, Kabir who brought home to the Hindu society the corrupt and meaningless practices which had creeped into their social and religious institutions. Both of them their respective styles not only attacked upon the then prevailing social customs but also offered an alternative system as would have enabled man to realize himself and his capacities to the best possible extent. Of the two, it is Guru Nanak who seems to have throughly diagnosed the case of the Hindu community of his time, and found out that a "religious revival was the only remedy which could save it from impending destruction."[2]

While it may not be possible to refute the argument of certain Sikh scholars who contend that the *bhakti* reformers like Kabir are not the "forerunners of Sikhism",[3] it cannot, at the same time, be denied that the *sant* tradition which Nanak nourished and strengthened in the Punjab emanated from the *bhakti* movement in India. To quote Macleod, "The categories employed by Guru Nanak are the categories of the Sants, the terminology he uses is their terminology, and the doctrine he affirms are their doctrines."[4] Therefore, there are several parallels which can be drawn between the ideas and ideologies of the reformers of the *bhakti* movement and those of Guru Nanak.

"The *bhakti* movement, it is well known, started with a spirit of decided criticism and protest against the essentially *jāti*-ridden and ritualistic Brahmanism of the priests as much as against the barren scholasticism of Brahman intellectuals."[5] It is this mood of protest against the priestly classes in religion and particularly among the Hindus which Guru Nanak imbibed so strongly that the movement which he guided and the sect of which he was recognized the founder, came to be identified as anti-brahminism. The brahmins and the mullahs who followed religion as a profession were likened to the "blind leading the blind". His policy was a revolt against the tyranny of the class of brahmins.

The social consequences of brahminism which Nanak's perceptive intellect and sensitive mind could not tolerate was the division of the society into classes and castes. In Nanak's eyes all men were equal as they were all created by the same God. He identified himself with the lowliest of the low, said Nanak:

> Lowliest among the low-born
> I am lowliest of the low
> . . . .
> where the lowly are protected
> The abounds God's grace and benediction.[6]

He therefore, rejected a society and a social system the laws of which distinguished between the high-born and the low-born. His belief was that "man is free, spiritual and a creative being and no customary or so-called divine law should bind him to a code of conduct which makes one class superior to another."[7] All men are God's own creations. "False is caste and false are worldly titles. One Supreme Lord sustains all."[8] He wrote further:

> Know men by their worth. Do not ask their caste. There is no caste in the next world . . . . Neither caste nor birth will be enquired . . . . As you act as will your caste and status be."[9]

In brief, he found caste detrimental in the moral and religious realization of man as it inculcates a false sense of pride in the heart and mind of those who followed it inasmuch as it deprives the others of an opportunity to excel.

Nanak was equally critical of formalism and ritualism which had come to occupy a very prominent role in the socio-religious practices of the society of his times. Such a religion was only a farce and society worth rejection. He said:

> Religion consisteth not in a patched coat,
> or in a Jogi's stuff, or in ashes smeared
> over the body;
> Religion consisteth not in ear-rings worn,
> or a shaven head, or in the blowing of horns
> Religion, consisteth not in mere words;
> He who looketh on all men as equal is religious.
> Religion consisteth not in wandering to tombs or places
> of cremation, or sitting in attitudes of contemplation.
> Religion consisteth not in wandering in foreign countries,
> or in bathing at places of pilgrimage.[10]

As a corollary to his views on religion, Nanak was opposed to idol worship, which to him was pure formalism. A truly religious person was he who would serve others, help the needy and share his earnings with others in distress. This, he said, was "a far better way of worship of God than worship of images of Incarnations of God". "Worship none but God, no tombs or shrines."[11]

However, it is not only the idiom and language of protest which Nanak adopted that he is found to be so close to the tradition of the *bhakti* movement particularly to the *sants* (saints) in the Punjab and outside, but also because the philosophical and ethical principles of Guru Nanak seem to converge with those of the *bhaktas* and *sants* in the medieval times in ways more than one. One of the most prominent features of Gurk Nanak's theological and ethical system is his belief in the oneness of God. This monotheism in Guru Nanak must be regarded primarily an inheritance from the *bhakti* movement mediated through the *sant* tradition.[12] said Nanak:

> The Being is one. He is eternal. He is immanent in all things and the sustainer of all things. He is the creator of all things. He is immanent in His Creation. He is without fear and without enmity. This being is not subject to time. He is beyond birth and death. He is himself responsible for His own manifestation (He is known) by Guru's grace.[13]

The opening words of *Guru Granth Sahib, Ik Aunkar* (there is one god) and which is often called the *mool mantar*, is the essence of Nanak's entire religious thought. The different forms which appear are of God alone. Speaking of the six schools of Indian philosophy Nanak commented:

> There are six schools of philosophy, six teachings and six doctrines. The Guru of Gurus is but one, though he hath various forms.[14]

On this view of the absolute rests the whole structure of Nanak's social and religious thought. The ultimate reality of the entire existence is therefore, the Almighty.[15] Speaking of the significance of this feature of Nanak's thought Sir Gokul Chand Narang writes:

> It was he who taught the Hindus after long long ages that there was only one God but he was free from the bondage of birth and death, that he was above Viṣṇu, above Brahmā, superior to Śiva, and the creator of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa.[16]

Nanak thus questioned the divinity of Rāma or Kṛṣṇa and brought them down to the level of mortals.[17]

This belief in one God was common to the sants and thinkers of the *bhakti* period who by and large were dissatisfied with the religious vagaries of the Hindus. The *sant* tradition is said to be have given the direction in this regard to Kabir as well as to Nanak. Indeed the *sant* tradition appeared like a dawn before sunrise.[18]

Nevertheless Nanak also seems to have been impressed by the Muslim Sufis in the strengthening of his monotheism. The Sufi saints who roamed round in the plains of Punjab, Sind and Uttar Pradesh had spread an identical message of the all-pervading character of God.[19] As such it also went into the shaping out of Nanak's philosophy.[20]

Yet another feature of Guru Nanak's philosophical teachings which brings him close to the *bhakti* cult is the stress he laid on love or *prema* for the Almighty. He asked his disciples to sing hymns of love and devotion to the Immortal, the formless Divine and thus attain unity with God. "Vaiṣṇava emphasis upon the absolute necessity of love in the *bhakti* sense commonly expressed in the figure of the bride yearning for her Beloved, the Divine Bridegroom" is clearly discernible in Guru Nanak's thought.[21] How much was Nanak indebted to the *bhakti* ideas can be illustrated from the following words of his:

> If one gains anything from visiting places of pilgrimage, from austerities, acts of mercy, and charity, it is of negligible value. He who has heard, believed and nurtured love in his heart has cleansed himself by bathing at the *tirath* which is within.[22]

At another place Nanak said:

> He who worships the True One with adoring love, who thirsts for the Supreme Love, who beseeching cries out, he it is who finds peace, for in his heart is love.[23]

But, while the medium for the realization of God in both Guru Nanak and Vaiṣṇavites was the same it is not so as far as the realizable is concerned. Nanak's God was formless, *nirākāra*, while of the *bhaktas*, particularly of the Bengal Vaiṣṇavism was Kṛṣṇa. Likewise for some others it was Viṣṇu or Rāma with which God was identified. Therefore, analogy between Nanak and various other schools of *bhakti* movement cannot be stretched too far.

Guru Nanak also shares with the *bhaktas* the concept and tradition of Guru. Not only Nanak upheld this tradition but in the course of the evolution of Sikhism as a distinct religious system, it came to acquire a critical role. Guru is the object of devotion as per *bhakti* tradition but for the followers of Sikhism Guru also at times becomes God in person. As a matter of fact there are variant interpretations of the meaning and significance of the concept of Guru. One is that Nanak linked Guru to God and the two are synonymous. Another is that it was even the voice of Guru as revealed through a perceptive mind and soul as he himself was:

> . . . . but through the word of the Guru He is revealed. By His Grace the Guru, the true Guru, revealed Him to me in this world where all dies, in the nether world, and in the Heavens.[24]

Yet there is also a personal Guru, a God of grace to whom man responds in love.[25] Whatever might have been the meaning and interpretations of the term and concept of Guru originally in

Nanak's philosophy the fact is that the "doctrine was magnified in importance and during the middle years of the eighteenth century it assumed a position of supremacy within the Panth."[26]

II

But, despite the fact that Guru Nanak was so close to the *bhakti* tradition of the reformers, it will be incorrect to say that he was like all of them in the collective or individual sense. First of all it must be remembered that the *bhakti* cult which he imbibed in his religious and philosophical system got percolated through the Sant Sampradāya which was not the pure and complete version of the Vaiṣṇavite *bhakti* as was known to the other parts of the country particularly in Bengal. An important constituent of the Sant Sampradāya was the Nātha,[27] or the Gorakhpanthic tradition. The other constituent of the *sant* tradition was derived from Sufism.[28]

Secondly, developments in and around Punjab and the currents of ideas and beliefs during Nanak's time or a little before him ,did also have a great impact on his mind and the belief in the system which he ultimately evolved. The message therefore which he gave was undoubtedly rooted in the prevailing socio-economic and even political conditions. Religious life in the Punjab in the days of Guru Nanak did not lack in variety and even richness. "Perhaps in no other province of India there was so much scope for intermingling of religious ideas and practices."[29] Therefore, Nanak assimilated in him many of the ideas and doctrines from other sources even though the *bhakti* source remains most pronounced and prominent. "The greatness of Guru Nanak" says MacLeod, "lay in his capacity to integrate a somewhat disparate set of doctrines, and to express them with clarity and a compelling beauty."[30] Thirdly, and most importantly perhaps, Guru Nanak, as a social reformer had not only a message to transmit, but a clear and a vivid objective before him. "Neither the leaders of the *bhakti* movement nor of the Nāthpanth and the *sant* synthesis attempted to do what Guru Nanak did, not in any systematic manner at any rate."[31] It is true that all of them were able to attract a considerable number of followers or *bhaktas* who would sing their song and spread their sermons but there was no conscious and organised an effort to construct a distinct community out of them. Less unknown were the efforts to build institutions for purpose of unifying the groups and individuals, who followed their faiths. Their aim seems to have been the individual, not the society in any significant sense."[32] Consequently while the Nāthpanthīs or Kabirpanthis got almost totally vanished the followers of Guru Nanak survived in the form of a well-knit and organized community. It is true that the institution of Gurudwara which became an indispensable part of the Sikh faith had a tremendous contribution in this regard. At the same time Nanak's own efforts to spread his message were not insignificant. To sum up the argument, Nanak's uniqueness consisted of the quality with which he synthesized several of the religious traditions into one. Speaking of this contribution of Guru Nanak Prof. A.C. Banerjee writes:

> Guru Nanak received a synthesis and he passed it on, but he did so in a form which was in some measure amplified and in considerable measure clarified and integrated. It is *sant* thought expanded and reinterpreted. The result is a new synthesis, a synthesis which is cast within the pattern of *sant* belief but which nevertheless possesses a significant originality and, in contrast with its *sant* background, a unique clarity. It possesses, moreover, the quality of survival, for it remains today the substance of a living faith.[33]

A point where Guru Nanak breaks off from the *bhakti* reformers is that mysticism is not such a striking feature of his teachings. On the contrary he presented before the people a very simple form of creed which common man could understand and follow without any difficulty. His concern for life in this world was so large that he was opposed to asceticism. He neither preached nor followed the path of renunciation in order to attain spiritual unity with God. He killed "by example and precept, the old idea that a householder's life was a barrier to spiritual progress."[34] The religious movement in India which preceded Nanak or which were at progress during Nanak's times were "ritualistic or narrow-minded and even bigoted." "Vallabhācārya, of the Vaiṣṇavas with exception, every leader held up renunciation of the world as the highest virtue. Ramanand, Gorakh, Kabir (though a married man himself), and even Caitanaya spoke of the nothingness of the life on earth.[35] Guru Nanak, on the other hand, "was no recluse from family and society; indeed he enjoyed upon himself and his disciples or *śiṣyas* strict and faithful carrying out of the duties and obligations of a householder."[36] As a matter of fact he was critical of those who sought retirement from worldly life and responsibilities in order to pursue what were considered "the higher ends of spiritualism." Nanak put the seal of his sanction and approval on all worldly pursuits, provided that they were not indulged in at the cost of righteousness and truth."[37]

In this respect Nanak broke a long established religious tradition ever since the rise of Buddhism and Jainism in India vide which the pursuit of worldly life and common creature comforts were considered impediments in the realization of man's salvation. This kind of stigma on these objects was certainly not there in the ancient Vedic system of life. Guru Nanak also did not ask for any kind of negation and declared himself positively in favour of worldly life, of acceptance of the duties and obligations of the human individual to the temporal and material and at the same time of equal acceptance of the duties and obligations of religious discipline and spiritual quest for the Ultimate. After long centuries he gave back to the people of India the idea and the ideal of balanced life.[38]

If simplicity and ease with which Nanak's teachings could be followed by an ordinary man constituted one important factor of popularity, another factor in that direction was the medium which he adopted for the propagation of his ideas and teachings. He spoke in a language which layman could easily understand. Traditionally the great religious leaders in India chose Sanskrit as the mode of their articulation and expression. The use of Sanskrit was partly responsible for the elevated status and role which scholastic brahmin came to occupy in the ancient Hindu society. But when *lok bhāṣā* replaced *deva bhāṣā* it "brought religion to the heart of the masses . . . . Religion ceased to be a mystery behind a linguistic curtain."[39] Guru Nanak, very much like Kabir, pronounced a theological system in *sādhukari bhāṣā* the base of which was Khari Boli, and which was understandable even to those who had not studied Sanskrit. Nor did he quote from Vedas and Purānas in order to establish his norms and thesis. Evidently in such a system there was no scope for a group of intellectual brahmin elites to explain and interpret or even to guide the practitioners of the creed. Indeed, Nanak consciously and carefully designed his system in such a manner as would not permit any prestigious position to the priestly classes like the brahmins or mullahs had come to occupy in

Indian society. To a great extent, therefore, the use and popularisation of common man's language was consistent with Guru Nanak's attitude towards the priestly classes and his rejection of brahminism.

The choice for vernacular as the medium of instruction and propagation does indeed place Guru Nanak in the category of the *bhakti* schools in general, but he went even a step ahead in this regard. The form of vernacular which he employed was understandable to a specific group of people and limited to a geographical part of the country. It was the dialect spoken and understood largely by the Jats in the Punjab. This explains why this group of the people was particularly attracted to Sikhism in the course of history. The commonality language gave the followers of Nanak and the Sikh religion a compactness not earned by any other group of followers of the *bhaktas* or performers. But the same factor was also responsibe for the message of Nanak and of the following Gurus remaining predominantly confined to the geographical limits of Punjab. Thus while Bengal Vaiṣṇavism did have wide popularity outside Bengal in many other provinces of India "the Sikhs lived as fellow members of common society, united by religious and social ties which became stronger with the lapse of time."[40]

The limited entry of the higher castes into the fold of the new faith kept it comparatively free from the emergence of rigid social distinctions and the development of non-egalitarian forces.[41] A large number of the people from the low-caste Hindus came under the fold of Sikhism in order to end their out-caste status. To some extent they were successful in upgrading their social position. However, towards the beginning of the present century the Sikh society experienced the emergence of Mazhabis and Ramdasia sects who constitute the low-caste groups and under the new legal and political system they are covered by the "protective discriminatory" provisions of the law.

Be that as it may, there can be no denying the fact that Guru Nanak who raised such a strong voice against the caste-ridden Indian society, would have been the last to have conceived of a society, as would accord a position and status to an individual determined by birth or caste. But then this is not the only deviation in the Sikh *panth* and society. There are quite a few more. For example, Sikh practices and institutions are not totally bereft of all kinds of formalism and ritualism. Even a form of worship has grown. "The *Granth* is worshipped almost exactly in the same way as the best of idols was ever worshipped by the most idolatorous of Hindus."[42] In the same manner it is doubtful if Guru Nanak or his immediate successors would have permitted the role which the Sikh priestly class has come to play in the social and wider affairs of the Sikhs today. Yet, to explain these and many other developments will require wider understanding and deeper analysis into the evolution of the Indian society of which Sikhism has been an integral part.

The above analysis shows that Guru Nanak and the totality of his thought can best be understood and interpreted in the context of what happened and was happening in India as a whole and in the Punjab in particular. The ideals of reform and revivalism inspired him as they did many of his contemporaries, slightly older or younger. Led by these ideals he presented before the people a way of life which was purposeful; a social order which was humane and just; a moral code which enabled man to lead a full and balanced life. His appeal was not sectoral and his message was universal in nature.

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[11] Ishar Singh, *The Philosophy of Guru Nanak: A Comparative Study*, vol. 2, p. 197.

[12] Macleod, op. cit., (1968), p. 160.

[13] Jodh Singh, *Guramat Nirnay* (in Gurmukhi), p. 1.

[14] Quotes from one of Guru Nanak's hymns in the *Sohila* which Sikhs recite before going to bed.

[15] Harbans Singh, op. cit., p. 24.

[16] Narang, op. cit., p. 24.

[17] Ibid., p. 257.

[18] Macauliffe, op. cit., vol. VI, p. 1.

[19] N. Ray, op. cit., pp. 52, 56.

[20] Macleod contends that Sufi influence on Guru Nanak was not "Significant". For details see his *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, pp. 158-63.

[21] Macleod, op. cit., (1968), p. 213.

[22] *Japji, The Ādi Granth*, p. 4.

[23] *Aṣṭapadī* 5 (1), *The Ādi Granth*, p. 505.

[24] *Sorathi* 8, *The Ādi Granth*, pp. 597-98.

[25] Macleod, op. cit., (1968), p. 164; N. Ray, op. cit., pp. 63-64.

[26] W.H. Macleod, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community: Five Essays* (1975), p. 47.

[27] Nāthpanthīs were yogis and their distinctive discipline embodied the practise of Haṭha-yoga. They also rejected such exterior religious forms like idol-worship, pilgrimage etc. and emphasized on unity of God with human soul.

[28] A Muslim order of saints which emerged in Persia and Arabic countries and a form of which was dominant in the Muslim community of the Punjab and Uttar Pradesh during fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

[29] A.C. Banerjee, *Guru Nanak and His Times*, pp. 96-97.

[30] Macleod, op. cit., (1975), p. 7.

[31] N. Ray, op. cit., p. 61.

[32] Ibid.

[33] A.C. Banerjee, op. cit., p. 161.

[34] Ibid., p. 191.

[35] Narang, op. cit., p. 22.

[36] N. Ray, op. cit., p. 39.

[37] Narang, op. cit., p. 26.

[38] N. Ray, op. cit., p. 88.

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5

Earliest References to the Bhakti Concept

G.V. SAROJA

The origin of the cult of *bhakti* in Hinduism is not shrouded in mystery as Jadunath Sinha states in his article "The Bhāgavata Religion, the Cult of Bhakti".[1] It seems to be an indigenous growth, the author continues to state, remarking at the same time that some people find in it the influence of Islam, and others trace it to Christianity.

Bhakti or devotion is found in the *Ṛgveda Saṃhitā* in its various shades. Only the hymns pertaining to the Vedic deity Viṣṇu are considered for the present analysis.

Prayer for Material Prosperity

"May we be happy in a home in riches, in person, in children, bestowed upon us by thee Viṣṇu" (6.49.13).

"Grant us wealth conducting us by safe path" (6.69.1).[2]

Viṣṇu is propitiated with oblations. It is stated that Viṣṇu is *sarva devatā*, all the other deities are branches of Viṣṇu (7.40.5). "Let not Viṣṇu abandon us", Vasiṣṭha, the Vedic seer prays (7.93.8).

The mortal desirous of wealth quickly obtains it if he presents offerings to the widely renowned Viṣṇu, if he worships him with devoted mind and adores so great a benefactor of mankind (7.100.1).

Prayer for Its Own Sake

The seer Dīrghatamas, in the *Ṛgveda Saṃhitā* (1.154.1) exhorts us to earnestly glorify the exploits of Viṣṇu who made the three worlds, sustained the spheres thrice, traversing the whole, and who is praised by the exalted. It is stated that Viṣṇu abides in prayer (1.154.3).[3]

"May our praises and prayers, the causes of good fortune attain Viṣṇu at this sacrifice" (3.54.14).

Indra and Viṣṇu are the generators of all praises (6.69.2). The praisers of Viṣṇu are firm in their conviction, and he has made a spacious dwelling for his worshipper (7.100.4).

The sage Vasiṣṭha prays Viṣṇu thus:

'I who am feeble, praise Thee 'who are powerful' (7.100.5).

'Conceal not from us Thy real form'—Viṣṇu fought in a battle under the guise of Śipiviṣṭa (7.100.6).

'May my laudatory hymns magnify Thee' (7.100.7).

'We offer praise to Viṣṇu who harms not his adorers' (8.25.12).

'Come here induced by my praise' (8.27.8).

Happiness

'May Viṣṇu be the promoter of happiness' (7.35.9).

The Final Goal

The seer Dīrghatamas exclaims: 'May I attain his favourite path in which god-seeking men-delight . . . . He is the friend of the pious' (1.154.5).

'We pray to Viṣṇu that you (the sacrificer and his wife) may go to those regions (the Supreme abode)" (1.154.6).

It is very clear that Viṣṇu is prayed for attaining the *puruṣārthas—dharma, artha, kāma*—and the end happiness or *paramam padam* (the supreme abode) reaching which there is no returning or rebirth.

The following are the key-words used in the above-mentioned hymns containing *bhakti*. Sāyaṇa's interpretations for the same are also given:

Words	*Meaning*
arkaḥ	*arcanīyāni śastrāṇi ca*
avivāsāt	*namaskārādibhiḥ paricaret*
urugāyāya	*bahubhiḥ kīrtanīyāya*
urugāyasya	*bahubahirmahātmābhirgatavyasya stutyasya*
gṛṇāmi	*staumi*
dāśat	*havīṃṣi dadhāt*
priyam	*priyabhūtam*
matīnām	*stutīnām janitārau*
manasā	*mananena stotreṇa.*
mardhavaḥ	*madhurasya*
yajate	*parakarṣeṇa pūjayet*
śamsāmi	*prakarṣeṇa staumi*
stomāsaḥ	*stotrāṇi*

The nine forms of devotion *śravaṇam, kīrtanam, viṣṇoḥ smraṇam, pāda-sevanam, arcanam, vandanam, dāśyam, sakhyam* and *ātma-nivedanam* of the *bhakti* cult can all be traced to the *Ṛgveda mantras.* As the *Bhāgavata* declares,[4] the Vedas deal with the three *puruṣārthas—dharma, artha* and *kāma,* but their real teaching is *mokṣa* or liberation by dedicating oneself to the Supreme Being who is the friend and well-wisher of all.

In the *Bhagavadgītā*, the term *eka bhakti* (7.17) and the phrase '*bhaktyā ananyayā*' (8.22) stand for the highest form of *bhakti.* The relationship between the worshipper and the Lord worshipped are described as that of the father and son, as between two friends, and that of the lover and the beloved in 11.44.

Viṣṇu being the generator of praises and the benefactor of mankind as defined in the *Ṛgveda Samhitā*, one has to conclude that the two actions imply 'grace'.

The *vaikuṇṭha*, stated to be the *paramam padam* of Viṣṇu, in the *Bhagvadgītā* and other texts, is mentioned in this sense in the *Ṛgveda Saṃhitā.* Vaikuṇṭha is the name of a *rākṣasī* who performed once a severe penance for getting a son equal to Indra. Indra who disliked the idea of another being equal in might to him, himself took birth as the son of the *rākṣasī* and was called Indra Vaikuṇṭha. Thus there is no connection between Vaikuṇṭha and Viṣṇu in the *Ṛgveda Saṃhitā.*

We can go even to the extent of asserting that the *madhura bhāva* and its eight progressive stages may be traced to the *Ṛgveda.* The four stages, *prema, sneha, māna* and *praṇaya* are definitely found in the *Ṛgveda Saṃhitā* texts mentioned above, and the other four stages of *rāga, anurāga, bhāva* and *mahā bhāva* may be found in Vasiṣṭha's outpourings in the seventh *maṇḍala.*

Viṣṇu has nothing to do with sin, while Varuṇa and Indra are entreated to wipe off or pardon their sins in the *Ṛgveda Samhitā.* Hence, the question of *maryādā* or *puṣṭi bhakti* in the *Ṛgveda Samhitā mantras* pertaining to Viṣṇu does not arise, though it is the *maryādā bhakti* or the *bhakti* attainable by ones own effort, and not the *puṣṭi bhakti* that is advocated in the hymns of Varuṇa and Indra.

The unity in diversity (or 'worshipping' though the mode, the content and the object of worship differ, as found in the medieval mystics of north India), can be found in the *Ṛgvedic* worship too. Even the sacrificial rite with its offerings insists on devoted, firm, pure and correct mode of praying and offering which are the various aspects of *bhakti*. What is important is the mental mode and not the external paraphernalia that takes the various shapes.

There is no necessity to point out that the Sahajiyā cult cannot be approved by a strict follower of the Vedic injunctions.

The Vedic form of *bhakti* finds its extreme form in Śrī Caitanya's philosophy[5] with his emphasis on *hlādini śakti* and *madhura bhāva*, including in its fold people irrespective of caste and creed.

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[1] *Cultural Heritage of India*, vol. IV, p. 146.

[2] *Ariṣṭaiḥ pathibhiḥ* is interpreted as *anupadravaiḥ mārgaiḥ* by the commentator Sāyaṇācārya.

[3] This can also be interpreted as 'one who abides in high places'.

[4] Swami Tapasyananda, *Bhakti Ratnāvalī of Vishnu Puri*.

[5] S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, vol. II, pp. 760-65.

6

The Medieval Bhakti Movement: Its Influence on Jainism

JAGDISHCHANDRA JAIN

George Grierson has observed that the *bhakti* movement has been the most extensive and widespread movement among all other Indian religious movements of medieval India which exists even today. The era of *bhakti* poetry is recognized as the golden period of Hindi literature which has given birth to numerous well-known Hindi poets of the medieval period. The great Śaṅkarācārya maintained the doctrine of salvation by means of knowledge (*jñāna*) which was as good as intuition and quest of subtleties. Later new forms of devotion (*bhakti*) received formal shape and this task was accomplished in different forms by a series of theologicians such as Rāmānuja, Madhva and Nimbārka in the south, who succeeded Śaṅkara. Rāmānuja preached *bhakti yoga*, intense devotion to Viṣṇu when the worshipper realized that he was but a fragment of God and that he was wholly dependent on him. During the *bhakti* era, religion turned to be a subject-matter of emotional and sensuous feelings rather than of abstract knowledge when the emphasis was laid on worship, propitiation, adoration and abandonment of the self, putting one's soul completely in the hands of God, trusting in his will and waiting confidently for his grace. *Bhakti* derived its inspiration from the Āḷvārs of Tamil Vaiṣṇavism which after rich growth in the south travelled to the north through the agencies of Rāmānanda and Maharashtra saints.

No Scope of Bhakti in Early Jainism

Jainism is a religion of renunciation based on the principle of non-attachment and non-possession which can be practised by undergoing penance and mortification; therefore there is no scope of *bhakti* here as a means of achieving salvation. Jainism does not maintain that this world has been created by God, who is one, eternal, omnipotent and is capable of doing and undoing things at his will. Here Godhood can be achieved by an individual by practising penance, leading to the annihilation of *karmas*. Then the soul becomes free from passions (*vītarāga*), deprived of any desire or attachment whatsoever. Under the conditions the question of appeasement or propitiation to the liberated soul (*siddha*) by exhibiting ardent devotion does not arise. Ācarya Vaṭṭakera (*c.* second century AD) has stated in his *Mūlācāra* (7.69-70): "Out of devotion the saint wishes to be bestowed upon freedom from birth and death (*ārogya*), achievement of enlightenment (*bodhilābha*), and fixing the mind on auspicious thoughts at the time of death (*samādhi*) but this is not claiming the reward of penitential act (*nidāna*). This is a false speech (*asatyamṛṣā*), merely a devotional language, as God Jina, being beyond attachment and aversion, cannot be expected to offer anything." Another Jain teacher Vidyānandin, also known as Pātrakeśarin (ninth century AD) in his *Pātrakesarī-Stotra* (37), an elaborate hymn in praise of Mahāvīra, has declared: "O venerable one, you have never directed the act of constructing places of worship, giving charity, worshipping deity etc. which lead to the death and suffering of the people. In fact, such acts have been appropriated by *śrāvakas* (hearers of the law) themselves out of devotion."

Superhuman Qualities Attributed to a Tīrthaṅkara

It is noteworthy that there have been songs of praise (*stuti*) in honour of a *tīrthaṅkara* in early Jainism but they are quite different from those composed by later writers. For example, eulogising Mahāvīra in the *Ācārāṅga* (Upādānaśruta, I. ix), his severe penance while travelling in the country of Lāḍha, inhabited by tribal people, has been characterized and not his miraculous powers. In the same way, in the chapter dealing with Vīrastuti in the *Sutrakṛtāṅga* (I.vi), distinguishing Mahāvīra as a great hero, he has been portrayed "as the Airāvata among elephants, the lion among animals, the Gaṅgā among rivers and the Garuḍa among birds." But gradually the scene changes with the passage of time. To make him as superhuman, a *tīrthaṅkara* was included among *śalākāpuruṣas* (great man), endowed with distinctive physiognomical signs (*lakṣaṇa*) and marks (*vyañjana*).[1] It is said that the ordinary human beings are said to have possessed 32 marks, whereas the Baladevas and the Vāsudevas 800 and the *tīrthaṅkaras* and the Cakravartins 8000.[2] The *Kalpasūtra* (4.66 ff) has stated that when Vardhamāna

Mahāvīra was born, king Siddhartha sent for interpreters of dreams (*suviṇa-lakkhaṇa-pāḍhaga*), who were well-versed in eight divisions of Mahānimitta. Predicting the future of the child, they declared that either he would become a sovereign king with his dominion extending to the four quarters (*cāuranta-cakkavaṭṭi*) or a *Jina* (victorious), leader of the three worlds, the sovereign of excellent religion (*dhammavara-cakkavaṭṭi*).[3] It is stated that the body of Ṛṣabha is supposed to have possessed of various auspicious marks. The marks of *śrīvatsa*, a fish, a pitcher, a thunderbolt and a goad are considered the marks of distinction.[4]

Supernatural Phenomena

Like the signs and the marks, the *atiśayas* or miraculous events are associated with superhuman qualities of a *tīrthaṅkara*. These qualities have been introduced from his very birth which is believed to have been attended by heavenly divinities. The *Jambuddīvapannatti* (5.112-23)[5] provides an elaborate description of the birth-ceremony of Ṛṣabha. It is said that as soon as Ṛṣabha was born, alarmed by shaking of their thrones, several groups of gods and goddesses appeared; they took the child to the Mount Meru, where he was given a ceremonial bath (*janmābhiṣeka*). The five auspicious events (*kalyāṇaka*) have been enumerated in the life of a *tīrthaṅkara*: the celebration of conception (*garbha*), of birth (*janma*), of renunciation (*tapa*), of enlightenment (*jñāna*) and of salvation (*mokṣa*).[6] The *tīrthaṅkaras* are endowed with eight *pratihāryas* (miraculous phenomena)[7] and thirty-four *atisayas*, consisting of handsome, fragrant and healthy body with no perspiration and dirt. Even the blood which flowed through the veins of their body is believed to be transparent and milky in colour with flesh and blood without foul smell. After attainment of enlightenment numerous miraculous events are inserted in the life of a *tīrthaṅkara*. An assembly hall (*samavaśaraṇa*) is created by divine beings so that while preaching, his miraculous sound (*divyadhvani*) could be heard and interpreted by divine gods, human beings and animals alike. The body of the Enlightened One was free from all impurities; it shone like a crystal, with a royal insignia of a white parasol above and a bright circular halo around the head.[8] It is stated that the night the *kṣatriya* lady Triśalā delivered Mahāvīra, the divine gods and goddess showered nectar (*amaya*), fragrance (*gandha*), powder (*cuṇṇa*), gold (*hiraṇṇa*) and precious jewels (*rayaṇa*).[9] It is to be noted that not only a *tīrthaṅkara* but even the disciples of Mahāvīra, have been characterised as endowed with various supernatural and miraculous powers. Some of them were able to cure the disease simply by touching a patient (*āmosahi*), others by using their phlegm (*khelosahi*), their excreta and urine (*vipposahi*)[10] and dirt of the body (*jallosahi*). Some by the act of charms could assume any form at will, could rise through the air, could repeat the whole stanza by knowing a *pada*, and so on.[11]

Adoration: A Purely Mental Act

As a matter of fact the early *bhakti* was inspired by feelings of respect rather than of love. The glory of the divine grace was the glory of an emperor which the ordinary mortal could hardly contemplate. In Jainism since God *Jina* is free from passions, he is not supposed to evince interest in acquiring sovereign glory or grant any favour to his devotees. Samantabhadra, a renowned Digambara Jain author (fifth century AD), has appropriately said in his *Āptamīmāmsā* (?): "O revered one, you are not considered great as you are endowed with supernatural powers such as bringing the arrival of divine gods, moving in the sky, waiving of fly-whisks, and so on; such things are noticed even among jugglers (*māyāvī*). . . You are great as you are devoid of ignorance, attachment and aversion and your teachings are not contradictory to reason and commandments, and whatever is preached by you is incompatible with testimony." (6) Under the conditions, the innovation or propitiation of God in Jainism should be considered only a purely mental act leading to the infusion of the spirit of self-reliance in a devotee.

Adoration of Stūpas

The word *ceiya* (*caitya*; *cetiya* in Pāli) is related to a funeral pile or mound (*citā*) in Jain canonical literature. It denotes a sacred tree growing on a mound, hall or temple or place of worship.[12] The abode of a *jakkha* is often referred to as *ceiya* or *āyatana* in the Jain canon. It was a halting or resting place for Mahāvīra, Buddha and other religious ascetics. Later on *ceiya* was replaced by *thūbha* (stūpa) which was erected as a monument for preserving the memory of a person. A stūpa is a heap or pile of earth or bricks etc.[13] The Buddhist stūpas were erected over sacred relics of the Buddha. We are told that a stūpa was raised in memory of

Ṛṣabha, the first *tīrthaṅkara* of Jains, at the mountain Aṣṭāpada (Kailāsa). The *Jambuddīvapannatti* (2.33) has provided an elaborate description of grand celebration of *nirvāṇa* of Ṛṣabha: No sooner Ṛṣabha was relinquished from the worldly existence and was liberated, the throne of Indra was shaken and he set off to pay his homage to the mountain Aṣṭāpada with his retinue. The members of the retinue approached the dead body[14] of the *tīrthaṅkara;* they were downcast and meloncholic, walked a round about the body three times respectfully and waited upon it. Then a pyre (*ciigā*) was prepared out of excellent *gosīsa* sandalwood; the *tīrthaṅkara* was given a bath of *kṣīrodaka* water; sandalwood paste was applied to his body; and he was elegantly dressed and ornamented. Then the body was placed on a specially prepared palanquin which was put on pyre and set fire. After the body was consumed, and the fire extinguished by *kṣīrodaka* water, the bones (*sakkaha*) were collected and shared by heavenly gods.[15] Then the memorial mounds (*ceiya-thubha*) were raised in memory of the *tīrthaṅkara*. The heavenly gods returned to their respective abodes. They preserved the bones in their caskets and worshipped them.[16]

Thus though the memorial mounds were erected in memory of the diseased person, yet no image-worship was introduced. We learn from the Buddhist accounts that flowers and incense were offered to the Buddha and his relics, the garland or perfume or paint was presented to him, hymns and adoration were chanted in his praise and the lamps were lighted around the stūpa, yet the devotees had no image of the Buddha. But later, these objects of worship resulted in the invention of his image which appears in the early sculpture of Mathura, probably in the early part of the first century AD.[17]

Bhakti Cult in Jainism

As pointed out, the *bhakti* movement being the most widespread religious movement, involving free emotion and impulse, Jainism could not keep aloof from this very popular movement. As this cult evinced various rituals such as prayer, chanting of hymns, kneeling, prostration, reciting the rosary, bathing of the divinity, offering water, sandalwood paste, rice, flowers, sweets, fruits, burning lamp and incense before the statue, etc., it suited well to the emotional requirement of a devotee. As a result the cult of *bhakti* was introduced in Jainism leading to the activities such as those of building gorgeous temples,[18] erecting magnificent images, performance of their consecration with pomp and show,[19] celebration of birth and salvation of *tīrthaṅkaras*, regular worship of images in temples, decoration and ornamentation of images, arrangement of festive procession of an idol (*rathayātrā*), and so on.

Devapūjā (worship of divinity) and *gurupāsti* (devotion to *guru*) are considered among sixfold daily duties of Jains. Similarly, eulogy of twenty-four *tīrthaṅkaras* ((*caturvimśatistavana*) and salutation (*vandanā*) to God Jina (Arhanta and Siddha) are to those who excel in austerities, scriptures and virtues are considered among six essential (*āvaśyaka*) duties.[20] Then ten types of *bhakti* is mentioned in the *Daśabhakti*:[21] *bhakti* to *tīrthaṅkara*, to *siddha*, (liberated soul), to *śruta* (scripture), to *cāritra* (conduct), to *yogī* (monk), to *ācārya* (spiritual leader), to *nirvāṇa* (emancipation) to *pañcaguru* (five teachers), to Nandiśvara (a holy place) and to *tīrthaṅkara* Śānti (Śāntinātha). The period of the tenth century of Christian era and onwards is very important from the point of view of *bhakti* and *pūjā* in Jainism when a number of books dealing with the layman's discipline (*śrāvakācāra*) were composed by Jain authors. The name of Somadevasuri, a well-known Digambara *ācārya*, of the tenth century may be mentioned here. In his *Upāsakādhyayana* which forms the last three chapters of the *Yaśastilakacampū*, the author has provided with the details of directions with regard to the performance of *pūjā*. Needless to say that many of these directions are dominated by brahminism. Emphasising the importance of *pūjā*, he has stated: "Even though the actual image of an *āpta* (Arhat; an authoritative person) does not exist before a devotee, yet paying homage to the deity leads to meritorious deeds. Does the image of the Garuḍa (the lord of birds; enemy of serpent race) not able to remove the effect of poison" (34.461). Elsewhere (15.203) laying stress on the propagation of Jain religion, he has advocated the building of places of worship (*caitya*), Jain temples (*jinālaya*), employing means of knowledge (*jñāna*), and penance (*tapa*) and performing *pūjā* by displaying great banners (*pūjāmahādhvaja*). Somadeva has also emphasised the importance of *ācamana* (sipping water from the palm of the hand before meals etc. for purification), *homa* (the act of making an oblation to the gods by casting clarified butter in the fire) and *bhūta-bali* (offering oblations to all creatures).[22] Further (36.526-565; 37; 38; 39; 40), the author has narrated six types of *pūjā* such as consecration (*abhiṣeka*), worship (*pūjana*), songs of praise (*stavana*), muttering prayers (*japa*), meditation (*dhyāna*) and paying homage to the scriptures (*śrutārādhana*). It is interesting to note that under the section of *pūjana*, Somadeva has propitiated the eight guardians of the quarters (*dikpāla*) such as Indra, Agni, Yama, Nairiti, Varuṇa, Vāyu, Kubera and Īśa. They have been requested to grace the occasion along with their family members, accept the offering, stay in their respective quarters and pacify such obstacles which might stand in the way of those who are showing enthusiasm while performing the consecration ceremony of God Jina. Obviously, this shows the influence of Vedic rites. Further, Jinacandra in his *Dharmasaṅgraha Śrāvakācara* (fifteenth century AD) has enumerated five types of *pujā* in which the deities are invited (*āhvānāna*), installed (*sthāpana*), requested to stay near (*sannidhikaraṇa*), worshipped (*pūjana*) and discharged at the end of the ceremony (*visarjana*). It is a fact that while performing the Vedic sacrifice, Indra and other deities were invited and discharged at the concluding rite of the festival. Similarly, the mention of the consecration ceremony of God Jina by five divine food (*pañcāmṛta-abhiṣeka*) such as milk, sugarcane juice, clarified butter, curds and water[23] clearly indicates the influence of Vedic rites on Jain *pūjā*.[24] It was due to an influence of *bhakti* cult of Sáivism and Vaiṣṇavism that in the tenth century AD *yakṣas* were installed as guardian deities of the *tīrthaṅkaras* and the *yakṣi* cult was introduced in south India when the goddesses Jvālāmālinī, Padmāvatī, Ambikā and Siddhāyikā were given a prominent place in Jainism. It may be noted in this connection that though Jainism does not consider God as creator of this universe, yet Jinasena (ninth century AD) the author of the *Ādipurāṇa*, influenced by brahminical tradition, designates Ṛṣabha, the first *tīrthaṅkara*, as creator of the universe (*jagatāṃ sraṣṭā*), Vāmadeva (designation of Lord Śiva), of tawny colour (*piśaṅga*), possessing eight forms (*aṣṭamūrti:* five elements, mind, egotism and matter) and the last of ten incarnations (*daśāvatāracarama*).[25] It need not be pointed out that the above designations are applicable to God Śiva in brahminism. The author also seems to be dominated by brahminic influence when he admits the prominence of *samskāras* (a sacred ceremony, one which purifies from the taint of sin contracted in the womb and leading to regeneration) beginning from the conception until the death of an individual. These *saṃskāras* are in agreement with the corresponding rites accepted in brahminic religion. Jinasena has also referred to the ceremony of *yajñopavīta* (sacred thread) and the fire worship which are customary with the Vedic brahmins.[26]

Jain authors also composed hymns of praise (*stotra* or *stuti*) to be recited in honour of the *tīrthaṅkara*. These hymns were composed in Sanskrit, Prākrit, Apabhraṃśa and later in Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, Kacchi and other Indian dialects. Some of these poems are quite short, others are of considerable length. The *Uvasaggahara-Stotra* by Bhadrabahu is a hymn dedicated to Pārśva containing five stanzas. It has been quite popular among Jains and has undergone several editions, including an English translation by H. Jacobi in 1881. *Ṛṣabhapañcāśikā* by Dhanapala is another Prākrit hymn composed in fifty stanzas. The hymn is composed in an artificial style containing metaphors. It has been translated into German by Klatt. Among other important religious hymns, mention may be made of the *Ajiya-santi-thava* of Nandisena, the *Kāyatthii-tthaya* by Dharmaghoṣasūri, the *Laghu Ajita-santi-thava* (or *Ullāsikamathaya*) by Jinavallabha, the *Pāsajina-thava* by Dharmavardhana, the *Jayatihuyana* by Abhayadeva, the *Isimaṇḍala-thotta* by Dharmaghoṣasūri and others.[27] The *Jinasahasranāma-stotra* by famous Jinasena, the author of the *Ādipurāṇa*, deserves a special mention here. It has been composed on the pattern of the *Viṣṇu-sahasranāma-stotra* which refers to 1008 names of God Jina, calling him under various titles such as Śambhu, Viśvataścakṣu, Viśvavyāpin, Jagatpati, Śiva, Brahmayoni, Bhūvaneśvara, Kūṭastha, Hiraṇyanābhi, Hiranyagarbha, Ṛtvig, Yajñapati, Parambrahma, Puṇḍarīkākṣa, Vedavid, Anādinidhana. Caturvaktra, Caturmukha, Bṛhaspati, Śaṅkara, and so on, signifying the names of brahminic gods.[28] There have been hymns where the style of the ornate court poetry was most developed. In the *Siddhapriya-Stotra* by Devanandi, for example, the verses are rhymed in such a way that the same syllables in each of the two consecutive lines, have a different meaning. In the *Mahāvīra-stava* the same words occur three times over with a different meaning each time. In the *Nemi-Jinastava* no consonants occur accept *la* and *m*. Then, the *Caturhārāvali-Citrastava* of Jayatilakasuri contains verses in which the syllables are to be read in the shape of a cross, a lotus-petal, a *svastika*, etc. The hymns have been composed in which the poems are written in several languages, each stanza in different dialect such as Sanskrit, Maharashtrian, Magadhi, Sauraseni, Paisācī and

Apabhraṃśa.[29]

There have been serious types of hymns, somewhat philosophical in nature in praise of God Jina. In this connection the names of Siddhasena Divākara and Samantabhadra, the two renowned Jain logicians, are worth mentioning. Siddhasena is well-known for his thirty-two *Dvātriṃśikā-Stotras* and Samantabhadra for *Devāgama-Stotra* (or *Āptamīmāṃsā*), *Bṛhatsvayaṃbhu-Stotra* and *Jinaśataka* (or *Stutividyā*). Then, in imitation to Siddhasena Divākara' s *Dvātriṃśikās*, Hemachandra who was called "the Omniscient of Kali Age", composed two *Mahāvīra-Stotras*, containing thirty-two verses each, the one is called *Ayogavyavacchedikā* and the other *Anyayogavyavacchedikā*. He also wrote the *Vītarāga-Stotra* at the request of King kumārapāla. Later Upādhyāya Yaśovijaya (eighteenth century AD) composed several *stotras* such as *Vīrastuti*, *Śaṅkheśvara Pārśvajina-stutti*, *Pratimāśataka* and *Paramātmasvarūpa-pañcaviṃśatikā*. Among more popular *stotras*, the *Bhaktāmara-Stotra*, a popular hymn among Diagambaras and Śvetāmbaras, by Mānatuṅga (probable date the beginning of the third century AD in the opinion of Winternitz), the *Kalyāṇamandira Stotra* by Siddhasena Divākara, *Viṣāpahāra-Stotra* by Dhanañjaya (seventh or eighth century AD), and the *Ekībhāva-stotra* by Vādiraja can be mentioned. It is stated that Mānatuṅga was fettered with forty-two iron fetters and locked up in a house. Then, as the story goes as he went on composing forty-two verses of his *stotra*, the iron fetters broke one after another and he became free.[30] Hymns were also composed in Apabhraṃśa, Hindi, Gujarati, Rajasthani and Kannada. Among Hindi writers, the names of Banarasidas, Bhāgchand, Dyānatray, Bhūdhardās, Ānandghan can be mentioned. The works dealing with *pratiṣṭhā* (consecration of the Jain image) were also composed by various Jain authors. Thus the literature dealing with various aspects of *bhakti* went on increasing day by day.

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[1] The *lakṣaṇas* are the marks of distinction such as moles, black spots etc. They have been characterised in the *Aṅgavijjā* (37) under the categories of colour, sound, movement, place, collective body, length measure, weight measure, power, shape, progress, shadow and riches. The *vyañjanas* are dealt with in the chapter 38 where the moles and the peculiarities of the body have been described and how results could be prognosticated from them.

[2] *Niśītha Cūrṇi*, 13.4292. The Ambaṭṭha Suttanta of the *Dīgha Nikāya* refers to 32 bodily signs of a *mahāpuruṣa*.

[3] In *Jambuddīvapannatti* (2.30) Uṣabha (Rṣabha), the first *tīrthaṅkara*, is known as the first sovereign of excellent religion of the earth (*paḍhama-dhammavara-cāuranta-cakkavaṭṭi*). It is to be noted that the 12 Cakravartins, along with 24 *tīrthaṅkaras*, are considered among 63 *śalākāpuruṣas* (great men), and that 3 out of 12 Cakravartins, afterwards, attained *tīrthaṅkarahood*. This clearly shows that at a later period of Jainism the Cakravartins and the *tīrthaṅkaras* were made closely associated and the Jain teachers were obliged to assign a status of a Cakravartin to a *tīrthaṅkara*. Here a comparison can be made with the Ambaṭṭha Suttanta of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, referred to already, where it is stated, "Thirty-two bodily signs of a *mahāpuriṣa*, which if a man has, he will become one of the two (either a Buddha or an Emperor, Cakkavaṭṭi Rājā), and no other," Sukumar Dutta, *The Buddha and Five After Centuries*, p. 237.

[4] *Triṣaṣṭiśalākāpuruṣacarita*, I, p. 134ff. For Śrīvatsa see Jagdishchandra Jain, *The Vāsudevahiṇḍi—An Authentic Jain Version of the Bṛhatkathā*, pp. 636, 547, 593.

[5] Also see Jagdishchandra Jain, *Introduction to Dhammakahāṇuoga*, pp. 4-7; *Dhammakahāṇuoga*, I, pp. 6-19; also Jinasena I, *Harivaṃśapurāṇa* (8); Jinasena II, *Ādipurāṇa* (13).

[6] Compare the birth of Bodhisattva. It is said that when Bodhisattva, after descending from heaven, enters into the mother's womb, light is caused throughout the world and the ten thousand regions of the world shake. During the course of conception the child and the mother both are protected by four divine gods in all the four quarters. No sooner Bodhisattva is born unsoilded by phelgm and blood, he is held by divine gods; *Majjhima Nikāya*, Acchariyadhamma Sutta; *Nidānakathā*, Section II. Further, the biography of the Buddha, which is the chief content of the *Mahāvastu* (about the fourth century AD) which belongs to the Lokottaravādins, according to whom the Buddhas are "exalted above the world (*lokottara*) and adapt themselves to the worldly life only externally. Here we are told of miracles accompanying the conception, birth and enlightenment and the first conversions of the Buddha, Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, II, p. 240.

[7] A *tīrthaṅkara* is said to be distinguished from an ordinary *kevelin* by the presence of the following eight *pratihāryas* (miraculous phenomena): the *aśoka* tree, shower of divine flowers, miraculous sound (*divyadhvani*), waiving of fly-whisks, divine seat, a circular halo round the head (*bhāmaṇḍala*), having drum-like voice (*dundubhi*) and a large umbrella (*ātapatra*).

[8] For 34 *atiśayas* see *Samavāyāṅga*, 35: Kundakunda, *Niyamasāra*. Read *Lalitavistāra* (i.e. the detailed narration of the sports of the Buddha) which is considered among the earliest Mahāyāna texts. It consists of a flowing narrative of the life of the Buddha, containing a supernatural and marvellous account. This text was utilised by Sir Edwin Arnold for his popular poem *The Light of Asia*. It is stated in the *Mahāvastu* (I, 159,2): "The perfectly enlightened ones having nothing in common with the world, but with the great *ṛṣis* everything exalted above the world . . . Then, they wash their feet, though no dust clings to them; they sit in the shade, though the heat of the sun never oppresses

them; they take nourishment, though hunger never troubles them; they use medicine, though they have no illness, etc." E. Windish, *Die Komposition des Mahāvastu*, in *ASGM*, XXVII, 1909, p. 470 after Winternitz, op. cit., p. 240 note.

[9] *Ācārāṅga*, II, 15.993. Compare with *Lalitavistāra* (96) where during the course of delivery of the Buddha, 5000 *apsarās* appear each with divine ointment (*divyānulepana*), divine jars full of scented water (*divyagandhodaka-ghaṭa*), divine garments for the child (*divyadāraka-cīvara*) and splendorous music emerging from divine musical instruments.

[10] An interesting comparison can be made with the excreta of the Buddha which smelt fragrant (mentioned in the *Vimānavatthu*, XVIII) Sukumar Dutt, op. cit., pp. 218f.

[11] *Ovāiya Sūtra*, 15, p. 52.

[12] In the *Mahābārata*, *caitya* is represented no more than a sacred tree or a tree with an altar which is termed as a resort or the *devas*, *yakṣas*, *rākṣasas*, etc. and hence we are told not no injure it.

[13] *Niśītha Cūrṇi*, 3. 1535.

[14] It is stated in the *Āvaśyaka Cūrṇi* (p. 181) that after Uṣabha's attainment of omniscience, his hair, moustaches, short hair on the body and nails were removed but his twisted locks of hair were allowed to remain.

[15] In the *Vāsudevahiṇḍi* Saṅghadāsagaṇi Vācaka (185, 1-19 Indra was given the bones, the kings and royalties the other parts of the body and some people and the brahmins preserved fire. If anybody suffered from physical pain, he was said to have been cured by applying ashes. The fire was conserved by adding sandalwood to it. The building of memorial stūpas on the relics of Buddha and his relics shared by various people in Vaiśālī, Kapilavāstu, Pāvā, Kuśīnārā and other places can be well compared with the above account.

[16] This description to the disposal of the dead undoubtedly belongs to a much later period and seems to have been influenced by Buddhism. The ancient Jain texts such as the *Bhagvatī Ārādhanā*, the *Bṛhatakalpa Sūttra* and its *Bhāṣya* and the *Āvaśyaka Cūrṇi* refer to an old tradition when the dead bodies of Jain ascetics were left uncared in deserted places for the mercy of wild beasts and birds. See Jagdishchandra Jain, *Life in Ancient India as Depicted in Jaina Canon and Commentaries*, pp. 281-83.

[17] See Sukumar Dutt, op. cit., pp. 239f. There has been a tradition of Mahavira's image carved in his life-time (*jīvantasvāmi-pratimā*) recorded in the Śvetāmbara Jain canonical literature, but the tradition, in absence of any concrete proof, does not seem to hold good. Dr. U.P. Shah in his *Studies in Jain Art*, p. 4, however identifies this image with a bronze of *jīvantasvāmi-pratimā* from Akota, now in Baroda Museum.

[18] Very recently a circular Jain temple has been consecrated in Palitana, one of the holiest places for Jains, on 28 November 1984. The temple is said to be the first of its kind in the world constructed in seven years at a cost of one crore of rupees. The consecration ceremony was performed by 25 Jain *sādhus* and 150 *sādhvīs* and 108 Jain families drawn from different parts of India.

[19] The Mahāmastakābhiṣeka (the great head-anointing ceremony) is performed every twelve to fourteen years by Digambara Jains of the colossal statue of

Gommaṭeśvara Bāhubalī located atop a hill at Śravaṇabelagolā in Mysore state. The last time the *abhiṣeka* ceremony was performed in 1981 when one thousand and eight pitchers of saffron, sandalwood paste and holy water collected from the rivers of the country were poured on the statue. Flowers were showered down over the image and flags and illumination marked the grand celebration. At the feet of the statue were laid offerings of milk, clarified butter, sugar, jaggery and fruits.

[20] See *Āvaśyaka Sūtra*; *Mūlācāra*, 7.15, 42, 79ff: 1.24, 25; *Bhagavatī Ārādhanā*, 118 and commentary; 46 and commentary.

[21] Prabhācandra has written a commentary on this book. According to him, Kundakunda and Pujyapāda Devanandi are the authors of Prākrit *Dasabhakti* and Sanskrit *Daśabhakti* respectively Jagdishchandra Jain, *Prākrit Sāhitya kā Itihās*, pp. 263f.

[22] *Agnihoma* is also mentioned in the *Jambuddīvapannatti* (5.114); it finds mention in the *Kātyāyana Śrautasūtra* (Monier Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*). The *Jambuddīvapannatti* (ibid.) also refers to stirring fire by rubbing two pieces of sticks as the Vedic Aryans used to do. The text also refers to *bhūtikarma*; this rite was performed at a birth, marriage etc. as directed in the *Gṛhyasūtras* (Monier Williams, op. cit.), and *rakṣāpoṭṭalikā* (also referred to in the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*). It is noteworthy that the designation of Indra in the *Jambuddīvepannatti* (5.115) is marked under various titles such as *vajjapāṇi* (wielding a thunderbolt), *purandara* (destroyer of stronghold), *satakkatu* (having hundredfold power), *sahassakka* (thousand-eyed), *maghavan* (bountiful), and *pākasāsana* (instructor of the ignorant); he is also known as *śūlapāṇi* (having a spear in hand) and *vasaha-vāhaṇa* (riding a bull). This again testifies the influence of brahminism.

[23] See Jinasena, *Harivaṃśapurāṇa*, 22.21; Ravisena, *Padmacarita*, 68.14f.

[24] Hemādri (thirteenth century AD) in his *Caturvarga-cintāmaṇi* mentions milk, sour milk, butter, honey and sugar as five kinds of divine food.

[25] 14.26, 37, 44, 47, 51.

[26] See chapters, 38-40.

[27] See Jagdishchandra Jain, *Prākrit Sāhitya kā Itihās*, pp. 483f; Chandrabhal Tripathi, *Catalogue of the Jaina Manuscripts at Strassburg*, Section 5, 5.3 Hymns (Sanskrit and Prākrit) and 5.4 Hymns (other languages), pp. 322-57; Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, II, pp. 548-58.

[28] See 25.100-223.

[29] Winternitz, op. cit., p. 558.

[30] It is said that the poet Mayūra composed his *Sūryaśataka* in praise of the Sun-god and became free from leprosy. There is also the story of the restroration of the limbs of poet Bāṇa when he composed the *Caṇḍiśataka* in praise of the goddess. Winternitz, op. cit., p. 559.

7

Baba Shaikh Farid: A Harbinger of Hindu-Muslim Unity

M.S. AHLUWALIA

Religion serves both harmony as well as change in the transformation of a society. Even the social change, whether in Hindu or Muslim society, often took the garb of religion. The *bhakti* and Sufi movements questioned the fundamentals and were instrumental in bringing about radical transformation of socio-cultural structure and even the foundation of a new religion. It is interesting to note that Guru Nanak's movement began against religious differences and gradually turned into a new religion.

Punjab was one of the parts of India which felt the earliest impact of culture brought by the Turkish invaders. Simultaneously due to the Mongol upheaval in Central Asia, a large number of Muslims fled from their homes and settled down in India. The large number of local converts, added by scholars and Sufis, migrated to India in a bid to escape the Mongol terror. This brought about, as was expected, a new change in the social structure of early medieval Punjab.

As early as the eleventh century, Lahore and Multan had developed into two big centres of Muslim piety in the Punjab and later on, the mystic influence spread to many other centres, notably Uch, Thanesar, Panipat and Pak-Pattan etc. The Sufi settlements also indirectly contributed to the development of Indo-Muslim culture and a common language composed of local elements with a vast terminology drawn from Arabic and Persian. Although it is difficult to claim that the Sufis projected a wide-based liberalism, they nevertheless made themselves acceptable to the Hindu masses by their freedom from caste prejudice and general love of mankind.

The Sufis belonged to that group of Muslim society which was in real sense the harbinger of the Hindu-Muslim unity. Their aim was to popularize the essence of Islam and to impart to the people of Hindustan, the same sense of nearness to God which they had acquired by treading the true path shown by Prophet Muhammad.

They unhasitatingly accepted anything and everything from the Hindu culture which had not been specifically prohibited in Islam.

The Sufi movement was initiated by the Sufi saints in medieval India in order to throw open the path of salvation to everyone irrespective of his status. It was essentially a secular movement which denied the supremacy of any class or caste. The aim was also to secure privileges and rights for the lower sections of society. The various Sufi *silsilahs* were initiated by the learned Sufis and were aimed at spiritual as well as socio-religious uplift of the society.

Sufism was thus a religious movement within Islam but at the same time, it stressed asceticism and inner experience of the divine in contradiction to outer ritual. Their centres called *khanqahs*, attracted large crowds, who came to the Sufi saints for spiritual inspiration and to participate in emotional experience of the religion.

The Sufis of the Chishti *silsilah* went farthest in this respect, and became in consequence, the most popular among the non-Muslims. The local people understood and appreciated their teachings and preachings better than any other order of the Sufis. The saint who introduced the Chishti[1] order in India was Shaikh Moinuddin Chishti, who established his *khanqah* at Ajmer during the period of the Ghorian conquest of India in the closing years of the twelfth century.

Shaikh Moinuddin had a long line of spiritual successors who continued his mission and became eminently popular in Hindustan. Shaikh Farid, the desciple of Muhammad Bakhtiyar Kaki, is in many ways, the most popular and remarkable of the Chishti saints of India. In fact he is the most popular of all Muslim saints of India among the non-Muslims.

The early Indian Sufis believed in a pacific and non-violent approach towards the problems of the society. They considered self-criticism as the best way to minimise chances of friction in society. They "attracted the creative social and intellectual energies within the community and became the bearer or instrument of a social and cultural revolution."[2]

The Sufis were men of deep religious feelings who laid great stress on the principles of *tauba* (repentence), *wara* (abstinence), *zuhud* (piety), *sabr* (patience), *shukr* (gratitude), *khauf* (fear), and *riza* (submission to the will of God). Their aim was to practise

Islam with a view to attain *marifat* (gnosis) of Allah.[3] The mystical philosophy of the Sufis suggested a way to realise God and was based on love and renunciation. It suggested a remedy for spiritual salvation, moral degeneration, deterioration and class competition. The Sufi saints acted as a guide, friend and philosopher to their disciples. They took the responsibility for the moral, spiritual and ethical development of their followers.

Of the Sufi orders which found greater acceptance in India, i.e. the Qadiri, the Suhrawardi, the Naqshbandi and the Chishti, the last proved to be most influential, both in terms of great men that it threw up as well as the large numbers and the areas in which it had been accepted. The first centre of the Chishti *silsilah* was established at Ajmer in Rajasthan which became the greatest centre in north-western India for propagating Islam and spreading the message of love and spirituality.[4]

Baba Shaikh Farid[5] (AD 1173-1265) belonged to the Chishti Sufi order and established his seat at Ajodhan in Pakpattan (i.e. ferry of the pure) in Punjab. He was the *khalifa* (chief representative) of Khwaja Kutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki (the founder of Chishti *silsilah* in Delhi and *khalifa* or successor of the founder of Chishti *silsilah* in India, Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti). The Chishti *silsilah* in India may faithfully boast of three great saints in Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti of Ajmer, Baba Shaikh Farid of Ajodhan and Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya of Delhi as the greatest luminaries who laid the foundations of the 'order' on love and service for man and direct spiritual communion with God.[6]

According to the author of *Siyar-ul-Auliya*,[7] Baba Farid was born in 569 AH (AD 1173) at Khotwal near Multan in Punjab. He was schooled in mystic thought by his own pious mother Qarsum Bibi. Baba Farid received his early education under the tutorship of Maulana Minhajuddin. When Khwaja Bakhtiyar Kaki visited Multan, Farid fell under his spell and became his disciple. After having attained *khilafat* (teacher of religion) from his *Pir-i-Murshid* (Shaikh Bakhtiyar Kaki), he settled at Ajodhan.

Baba Farid underlined a special relationship between the *murid* and the Shaikh. In his *Jamait Khana*, no distinction was made between man and woman on any ground, as in his eyes, all human beings were equal. Farid's *khanqah* became the cultural centre where all classes of people met. He held discourses with the Hindu *yogis* in Hindawi dialect. According to a tradition, a large number of local tribes were converted to Islam owing to Baba Farid's influence.

It is noteworthy that Shaikh Farid allowed the Hindus to become his *murids* or spiritual disciples. This was some thing new and quite unpalatable to the orthodox *ulema* who failed to understand how a Muslim saint could spiritually guide anyone without formally converting him to Islam. But Baba Farid accepted non-Muslims as his *murids*, because salvation in his opinion, depended not only on cultural or communal labels, but on the genuine love and fear of God. It did not matter for Baba Farid whether a man called himself Hindu or Musalman.

The mystics in general were against having any contacts with the government and the officers and Baba Farid particularly insisted on this principle. The government was considered to be a sinful organisation. As such Baba Farid neither sought the favours of the contemporary rulers nor was he afraid of their wrath. Baba Farid was not an exception to the long established tradition of the Chishtis with regard to their negative approach towards the ruling class. Neither the dazzling materialism of the court life nor could the days of utmost poverty and starvation allure Baba Farid to accept a post and deviate from the path chosen for himself. It is evident from the mystic philosophy of the Chishti which was successfully preached and practised by Baba Farid. His advice to his followers was: "Do not associate yourself with the kings and nobles. . . Every *darvesh* who opens the door of association with the kings and nobles is doomed."

The chief mission of Baba Farid was the uplift and betterment of the masses, chiefly depressed and downtrodden. Although he avoided the company of kings and nobles, he never put any restrictions to poor and needy. In spite of heavy rush to his *khanqah*, Baba Farid granted audience to almost everyone. There was not even slightest distinction between the regular visitors and a newcomers and all were dealt with kindness and benevolence.

Shaikh Farid's greatest contribution to Sufi thought and movement in India is his teaching of mystic ideology through the medium of local language i.e. Punjabi. Instead of being devoted exclusively to Arabic and Persian, he composed poetry of high order in the Punjabi language. His writings had such excellence and mass appeal that the Sikh gurus included them in their holy scripture, *Guru Granth Sahib*. It is worthy of note that Punjabi literature had become older at least by two hundred years because of the poetry of Baba Farid included in the *Ādi Granth*. Baba Farid communicated his teachings to the simple folk of Punjab in native tongue, Multani Punjabi.

Baba Farid's poetry is of high order and more so, it is the first recorded poetry in the Punjabi language. His compositions were discovered by Guru Nanak and included in the canon of the teachings which he left for the guidance of his own followers—the Sikhs. Since then, these compositions have been reverenced by the Sikhs and form a part of the sacred scripture, *Guru Granth Sahib*. This fact is a unique example in the history of inter-religious good-will, where the compositions of a teacher of one faith have been venerated by the followers of another as a part of their own spiritual heritage.[8]

The quintessence of Islam, which Baba Farid preached throughout his life, can be proved by a cursory glance at his *ślokas* (couplets) included in the *Ādi-Granth*. In these *ślokas* while the imagery is purely Indian, the message is purely Islamic. This has greatly enhanced the appeal of his poetry and a Hindu reader feels no foreign note in this music of words, though the message might not be very familiar to him.

Shaikh Farid's language is concentrated and rich in thought. He sings of humility, forgiveness, love of mankind, renunciation and meditation. He describes God as kind, loving, forgiving and immensely powerful. To describe man's relation with God, Farid uses the imagery of the love of man and woman. In one of his *ślokas* Farid warns again and again against the seductive character of those ephemeral which engage our time and attention and bar our progress to enlightenment. He says:

How many have sat on the thrones on which we sit.
As kulanga came in *Kartik*, forest fires in *Chet*, lightenings
  in *Sawan*,
As woman's arms adorn her husband's neck in winter.
So transitory pass away; reflect on this in thy mind.[9]

In the following *śloka*, Farid is concerned with the plight of the soul which having lost its opportunities of salvation, now regrets the inability to return to the fleshy habitat:

When a woman is virgin she is happy;

When she is married her troubles begin.
Farid, she hath this regret that she cannot become virgin again.[10]

On the universality of pain and suffering, we have the following couplet:

Farid I thought I alone had the sorrow,
Sorrow is spread over the whole world.
From my roof-top I saw
Every home engulfed in sorrow's flames.

To counter sorrow and suffering, Farid teaches asceticism and contentment, for he knows, nothing abides except the name of the Lord. All friends and relations, needs must go "the way of all flesh". All mansions and empires would turn into debris sooner than we imagine.

Farid, attach not thy heart to houses, mansions and lofty palaces;
When unweightable earth falleth on thee, thou shall have no friend,' and
'Farid, set not thy heart on mansions and wealth,
think upon thy grave;
Remember that place whether thou must go.[11]

The concluding *śloka*, in the *Ādi Granth* is characteristic of Farid's humanistic creed:

All men's hearts are jewels; to distress them is by no means good;
If thou desire the Beloved, distress no one's heart.[12]

Farid's poetry adumbrates some of the major motifs and concerns of the Sikh scriptures. No wonder they find an honoured place in the *Ādi Granth*.

The Chishti order which Baba founded and nursed in the Punjab saw a vast proliferation through the continuing influence of his personality.[13] Before his death, Baba Farid had decided to appoint Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya[14] as his *khalifa* or successor. Nizamuddin Auliya in his reported conversations in *Fawaid-ul-Fuad*, has left a vivid picture of the personality of his great preceptor, Baba Farid and a number of anecdotes about him. The Chishti order spread its influence over the entire length and breadth of India.[15]

The mystical philosophy of Baba Shaikh Farid had conscious or unconscious effect upon the philosophical mind of such eminent mystics and saints as Nāmadeva, Kabir, Guru Nanak and Rāmānanda. They exhibited a happy and harmonious blend of two systems—the result of the two cultures. They insisted on oneness of God, denounced idolatory, opposed the caste system and laid stress on human brotherhood. As a result of their teachings and preachings, the *bhakti* cult came to occupy the minds and hearts of the people. They realised that true religion consists in *bhakti* or passionate feeling of love of God. This was in fact the essence of what was preached and practised by Baba Shaikh Farid.

Farid's contribution to Sufi thought and movement in India is remarkable. He stressed on action. He denounced any difference between the theory and fact of a Sufi life. Farid was, *par excellence* a man of the masses. The Chishti *silsilah* became extremely popular in the Punjab under his guidance. Even after his death Farid left 35 *khalifas* at different places in northern India. Guru Nanak's honouring the memory of Baba Farid bears out the latter's greatness as a distinguished and popular saint in the cultural life and history of early medieval Punjab.[16]

The main reason for the popularity of Baba Shaikh Farid and his teachings is that these easily conformed to Indian conditions and environments and attracted a large number of low caste people to his fold who had to suffer maltreatment at the hands of their own high-ups. The other reason for his popularity was that it recognised and patronised local language and also music as a vehicle of concentration when it was considered to be a taboo in orthodox Islam. The *sama* i.e. circular dance and *qawwali* i.e. congregational singing, were taken up to be the easiest and popular mode of concentration and meditation for the common man.[17]

Baba Farid was such a great soul to whom we owe a great debt of gratitude. His entire life was dedicated to the cause of downtrodden and service to mankind. Living in a small town in the Punjab, he lighted the torch of righteousness and religious tolerance and liberated mankind from the chains of narrow thinking and sectarian outlook. His contribution to the Punjabi language and religious literature and his message has proved a great blessing for the spiritual elevation of mankind.

> Farid, at midnight is scattered fragrant musk;
> Those asleep share not this blessing.[18]

REFERENCES

[1] The founder of the Chishti order was Khwaja Abu Ishaq Shami, who died in AD 940. He became the disciple of Khwaja Dinauri, a recluse Sufi in Baghdad. For reasons which are wrapped in mystery, he sent his disciple to preach the doctrine in Chisht, situated in Khurasan and ordained that the order founded by him should be known also after its centre, Chisht. G S. Talib, *Baba Sheikh Farid*, p. 21.

[2] Majid Ali Khan, 'Sufis and Their Influence upon Indian Society' (unpublished) paper read at I.C.H.R. seminar, New Delhi, 1981.

[3] See the author's article entitled 'Chishti Silsilah and Contemporary State and Society: A Case Study of Baba Shaikh Farid' read at the 22nd Annual Conference of the Institute of Historical Studies held at Bodh Gaya, 1983 (unpublished).

[4] For details about Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti, see *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, text (Persian), p. 47; *Sair-ul-Atab* (Persian text), p. 101 and Zahrul Hasan Sharid, *The Mystical Philosophy of Khwaja Moinuddin Hasan Chishti.*

[5] A number of works in the form of biographies as well as articles have appeared on the life and times of Baba Shaikh Farid. Among the most renowned works, from whom the present author has largely drawn his information about Baba Farid, mention may be made of:

K.A. Nizami, *Life and Times of Shaikh Farid-ud-din Ganj-i-Shakar*; G.S. Talib, *Baba Shaikh Farid: His Life and Teaching*; G.S. Talib, ed., *Baba Sheikh Farid: Life and Teaching*; Shabbir Hasan Nizami, *Shaikh Farid Ganj-i-Shakar* (Urdu); *Tarikh-i-Mashaikh Chishti* and the *ślokas* of Baba Farid incorporated in the *Ādi Granth.*

[6] B.R. Grover, 'Baba Farid: A Man of the Masses', *Babu Farid Commemoration Volume*, p, 79.

[7] Mir Khurd, *Siyar-ul-Auliya* (Persian), p. 91.

[8] G.S. Talib, op. cit., p. 11.

[9] *Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 488, *Rag Asa.*

[10] Translated by M.A. Macauliffe, in *The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors.*

[11] *The Sacred Works of Shaikh Farid, Rag Sahi, sloka*, 57-58 cited in G.S. Talib, op. cit., p. 46.

[12] Ibid., p. 55.

[13] Farid lived to the great age of ninety. He passed away on the fifth *Muharram*, AH 664 (AD 1265).

[14] Shaikh Nizamuddin was another illustrious saint of the Chishti order. He was venerated by vast multitudes. Among his fervent devotees was the poet Ghalib who is buried by the side of his tomb. He left to carry on the faith

another great Sufi saint, Shaikh Nasiruddin Chiragh Dehlvi.

[15] Its centres are established in Bengal, Deccan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar besides Delhi, Rajasthan and Punjab.

[16] B.R. Grover, op. cit., p. 82.

[17] M.S. Ahluwalia, op. cit., p. 11.

[18] *Ādi Granth*, *Rag Suhi*, *śloka*, 80.

8

Nature and Roots of Islamic Bhakti Movement and Syed Ashraf Jahangir Samnani

HAMID AFAQ QURESHI

The main aim of this paper is to outline a perspective with necessary background information, which should also be kept before while studying the medieval *bhakti* movements and the contribution of the Muslim saints to it for a proper evaluation of these, which, in itself, would be an indirect estimation of the various theses and antitheses propounded on the point, and then to study the life and teachings of Syed Ashraf Jahangir Samnani (1307/8-1424) in the light thereof.

Divergent views have always been expressed on medieval *bhakti* movements. Whereas some have considered these as an offspring of Islam or a corollary to the Islamic *bhakti* movement, popularly called sufism, the others have denied it on the gound that the concepts of monotheism and attainment of salvation through *bhakti*, propagated by the Muslim saints, merely rekindled the latent features of Hinduism, which had once formed the core of the ancient Hindu philosophy in the form of the *Bhagavadgīta*, the Upaniṣads and the like, simply because they are unaware with the genesis of monotheism and *bhakti* in Islam. Unable to catch hold of all the finer points of the issue, some have even gone to the extent of suggesting that the Islamic *bhakti* movement was something different from Islamic *shariat* (law) in the sense that is vied for attaining spiritual upliftment not through the cold formalism of *shariat* but through the warm yearning of the mystics after God in their own peculiar way called *tarīqat*; although all the Muslim saints have advocated in their sayings that *tarīqat* not falling within the ambit of *shariat* was an allusion and holds good only for those periods when degeneration set in and the successors deviated from the original path of their predecessors; and, finding its affinity to Vedāntism, sing laurels of their pantheistic doctrine of *wahdat-ul-wujood* (*hamah-oo-ast*, everything is He) but the doctrine of *wahdat-ush-shahood* (hamah az-oo-ast, everything is from Him) is merely a corrective of the former to them and becomes a butt of their wrath simply because they are unable to fathom that, as will be elaborated subsequently, these merely reflected the level of the ecstatic absorbment with or without interruption in viewing the *tajalli* (light) of God in a state of spiritual trance by those who advocated these. Similarly, ignoring the one and the same end for which these were marshalled by the mystics, some other features, concepts, institutions like *khanqah* and *silsilah*, and forms of the Islamic mysticism wherever tallying to some extent, with the like in non-Islamic sources, often tempts some to hold the conviction that it derived its inspirations and learnings from these although the migratory saints brought all these to India in a fully ripened state with them. However, while jostling with the cobwebs of all these, one often fails to perceive that the main aim of the Muslim saints was not merely the preaching of these doctrines and concepts but something nobler and loftier concerning to humanism and the upliftment of the human dignity in a land, where it had been denied for centuries together.

Many of the above-mentioned aberrations have proceeded from the assumption that Islam began with the advent of the Prophet Muhammad and not taking stock of those cardinal teachings of Islam, which formed the kernel of Sufism. Being historians, let us turn to the primary source on Islam, *Al-Qurān*, which also carries with it the distinction of being the only divinely revealed religious book having survived in its original form word by word, for solving these riddles.

Tracing the progress of Islam through the ages, *Al-Qurān* informs us that Islam came to the world with the advent of man, that all the prophets right from Adam to Muhammad, who was the last of the series, preached it to the masses and that their messages to the mankind were akin,[1] which included monotheism and perfect devotion to God, so that the human beings could not complain that there was no one to warn and to preach the glad tidings of the righteous path to enable them to mould their lives and character in the light thereof.[2] As to why only the specie of the human being was inspired to preach these, *Al-Qurān* clarifies: "If there were in the earth angels, walking, moving and habitated, we would have sent for them from heaven an angel, as messenger."[3] A series of prophets were sent to all the nations and tribes of the earth—obviously enough India is included in it, to preach them in their own language[4] so that they could comprehend the message fully and in the right perspective for tuning their souls and hearts with devotion to God. It also accounts for as to why the Muslim saints preached to the Indian masses in the local dialects or in a language akin to it and as to how it ultimately led to the growth of the Urdu language. The only difference between the prophets from Adam to Muhammad was what they were sent to preach to a particular nation or tribe but the latter is referred to in *Al-Qurān* as a preacher of "good tidings and a warner up to all mankind."[5]

The work of the prophets was continued by pious men after them,[6] which has in it the roots of the genesis of preaching by the Muslim saints through the ages; but subsequent gradual degeneration in the form of break-away factions deriving full inspiration from the teachings of the prophets for coining scriptures or beliefs subservient to their own learnings and advocacies by changing original commands by another saying and mixing truth with untruth by giving it currency as if it was divinely revealed so as to carve out their own gods and deities and worship of the saints and such other personages of the past for their own worldly gains, leadership of various communities and the like[7] and thus wiping out the original teachings, which necessitated fresh prophets and after them pious saints to remind, revive and restore what had preceded them in the righteous days of preachings of their predecessors.[8]

God created man for his *ibadat*,[9] which he had to do while "standing, sitting and reclining"[10] on in short encompassing within it the whole gamut of the human activity, for which he has to conduct himself not according to the dictates of his own whims and caprices but in consonance with the will of God[11] and his duties and responsibilities towards all the segments and individuals of the society, irrespective of their caste, colour and creed are enumerated.[12] For his guidance certain prohibitions are prescribed and in some cases, like *namaz* (prayer), and *roza* (fast) etc., special method of performing these are outlined but for the rest such as asking for something from God (*dua*) or reciting his name etc., he has been left free to do as he likes, which gives a clue to the various spiritual observances of the Muslim saints. Besides leading to spiritual upliftment and cultivation of deep love for God as he is commanded to do not only these but also every other thing as if he was seeing God, for which the Muslim saints always yearned, and if it was not possible for him to concentrate on it then as if

God was seeing to him,[13] certain sets of religious observances like *namaz* (daily), *roza* (once in a year) and *Hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca, at least once in a lifetime if one had the means to do so) etc. are prescribed to discipline his life into that mould so as to roll him out as a disseminator of peace, justice and equality etc. in other spheres of life. For that purpose he is not only enjoined to do good himself but also to persuade others to do that[14] as there is no compulsion in religion[15] and even the prophets were merely required to convey the message to the masses,[16] which was imitated by all the Muslim saints. Such a dispassionate and selfless service of the mankind can be possible only when one's heart, soul and mind is filled with deep love and devotion to God. In order to inculcate in him such instincts, he is required to perform all his *ibadats*,[17] the wide scope of which has already been clarified, not mechanically and ritualistically but with perfect devotion; otherwise all being done by him would be hollow and go waste.[18] Thus the *ibadats* of Islam are nothing but yearning after God, outwardly in the form of actions and inwardly in the form of thoughts, meditation and remembrance of God with deep *bhakti* and as much he is enraptured in these as he becomes nearer to God and best suited to fulfil the purpose of his creation.[19] Thereafter, the division of the mankind as high or low both in this world and in the eyes of God no more remains on the basis of caste, creed, colour, money or birth etc., but rather on the level of attainment in the realm of *bhakti* to God.[20] It should also be kept in mind that the teachings of all the prophets from Adam to Muhammad on all these aspects were akin.[21] At the same time, it is also required that there must be a group among them who not only practises all this but also persuades others to do that with wisdom, fair exhortation and by reasoning with them in the best way.[22] The Muslim saints belonged to the category of this particular group and were the living embodiments of all that has been discussed above. They not only made their own worldly and spiritual lives pious and devotional but also dedicated that whole lives for preaching others to do that and it was this systematic and effective attempt on their part to free the masses of India from the clutches of indignity, injustice, inequality, unrighteousness and various other bottlenecks of caste, creed, birth and colour, which set others in motion to do the same in a roundabout way in the form of various medieval *bhakti* movements. Their *khanqahs* were the centres, where the disciples were kept secluded and isolated for sometime to keep on certain spiritual prescriptions, which and the like done by the Muslim saints should not mislead anybody that it had to do anything with monasticism, which is prohibited in Islam,[23] and certainly it was never their aim, besides all that is enjoined by the *shariat* in order to concentrate their heads, hearts and souls on the deep devotion and love of God to attain nearness to God, to wipe out their deeply embedded attachment to the worldly love and mould them as through humanists for performing the noble task of reviving the lost human dignity.

The above will get further elaboration by the following sketch of the life and teachings of Syad Jahangir Samnani.

Syed Ashraf Jahangir Samnani: Life and Teachings

Life: Syed Muhammad Ashraf was the son of Syed Muhammad Ibrahim, an able ruler of Sumnan, the capital of a wide tract of lands of Iraq and Khorasan, and was born in 707 H (1307-8).[24] Samnan is still in existence in Iran, two hundred miles away from Isfahan and about one hundred miles to the north of the Caspian Sea. His mother, Khadija Begam, was a pious and chaste woman, passed most of her time in various religious observances and greatly influenced the life of her son.[25] Syed Ashraf was intelligent and quick grasping and memorised *Al-Qurān* at an early age of seven years. He was then got educated in all the branches of learning then in vogue and got complete mastery on *Hadis* (traditions), *tafsir* (exegesis), literature, philosophy, *fiqh* (Islamic law), *kalam* (scholasticism), and logic and became famous as a learned theologian in Iraq.[26]

While Syed Ashraf was still studying, his father died when he was only fifteen years of age and the responsibility of running the state fell on his shoulders. He proved to be an able and just ruler, details of which have been provided by his biographer.[27] Side by side with the kingship, he also continued to vie for the betterment of his spiritual life. He was a religious-minded man and besides the obligatory prayers and rituals, he also regularly observed non-obligatory ones. He was fond of the company of the saints and pious men and always enquired from them the ways of attaining spiritual upliftment. Such meetings benefited him considerably. He learnt books of mysticism; particularly *Fusus-ul-Hikam* from its commentator Shaikh Abdur Razzaq Kashani. who also acquainted him with the teachings of Ibn-ul-Arbi; particularly his doctrine of *wahdat-ul-wujood.* While attending his discourses, he also benefited from the teachings of Syed Ali Hamdani, and Khwaja Owais Qarni. All this brought about a great change in his outlook and he began to flutter for doing service of the mankind without the shackles of a state. As a consequences thereof, he, after ruling Sumnan for about ten years (1322-31/32), relinquished the state to his younger brother to devote his life for preaching Islam and Islamic *bhakti* to the people; particularly those residing in India.[28]

Travelling via Mewra-un-Nahr, Bokhara and Samarkand, he ultimately reached Ucch, via Multan and met Syed Jalal-ud-din Bukhari Jahaniyan-i-Jahangast, under whose care he got some serious lessons about mysticism from Shaikh Rukunuddin Abul Fateh.[29] After its fulfilment, he reached Arabia and got further lessons on mysticism from the pious men of Mecca and learnt more about Islamic theology and *hikmat* (science of Unani medicine) from Abdullah Yafai. After loitering in many cities in quest of knowledge and spiritual upliftment, he ultimately reached Delhi during the reign of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq and got himself acquainted with the teachings of the Chishti of mysticism under the care of Shaikh Nasir-ud-din Chiragh Dehlvi. From here, he once again migrated to Uchh and passed his time in preaching there.[30]

During those days Shaikh Alauddin Ganjnabat was a famous Chishti saint of Pandoh (Pandua) in the Malda district of Bengal being the worthy successor of Shaikh Siraj-ud-din Usman, who, in turn, was the disciple of Khwaja Nizam-ud-din Auliya of Delhi. Besides being a learned theologian, he was fully engrossed with the Islamic *bhakti* and his *khanqah* was flocked by thousands for getting lessons in the purification of soul and service of the mankind. The *khanqah* was run by its inmates, who had various duties of it assigned to them so that they could become habitual of sustaining hard physical labours in doing these and in place of becoming a secluded multitude devoted merely to the observances of prayers and other rituals could be reared up fully for serving the masses with a sympathetic heart for their sufferings and tribulations. It can better be gauged by the fact that even the son of the Shaikh was deputed on the duty of collecting wood from the forest for use at the *khanqah*.[31] Syed Ashraf was attracted by his fame to Pandoh. The Shaikh made him his disciple and undertook his spiritual teaching and training with great love and care so that his heart and soul could be filled with pure love and devotion to God.[32] Syed Ashraf passed twelve years of his life in these surroundings and benefited from it fully. He was given the title of Jahangir by the Shaikh and also the *kharqah* (skirt) of Nizam-ud-din Auliya and some other things of the kind such as turban, bead etc. but he gave all these to a beggar. This was not liked by some of the disciples of the Shaikh and on being enquired, he told that these things were of no use for him because not these but the teachings and doings of his teacher were of real value and significance, without following and imitating those he could never benefit from those. It itself speaks as to how far he was zealot in grasping the real purpose of the teachings and training of his preceptor.[33] After the completion of his training, the Shaikh asked him to go to Jaunpur for preaching.[34]

Passing via Maner, he commenced his preachings in the environs of Jaunpur. Besides the seekers of religious learning, a great multitude also flocked to benefit from his discourses. In his preachings, he explained everything with wisdom and effectiveness and insisted that mere acquisition of knowledge was not enough but one should act upon these to ward off false love of the world from the hearts and souls by means of absorption in the Islamic *bhakti* and deep devotion to God through spiritual prescriptions under an able guide. During this tour, he mainly resided at Muhammadabad, Gohna and Zafrabad and made many disciples.[35] From Zafrabad, he went to Iraq, Arabia, Yemen and Egypt, where he met with a number of learned men and saints to further sharpen his knowledge and spiritual attainments. On returning from these travels, he went to Pandoh to meet his preceptor and after a stay of a few days went back to Awadh.[36]

He went to Bhadode via Jaunpur where a landlord of the area Malik Mahmood gave him a tract of land around a tank, which he found to be a suitable place for the establishment of a *khanqah* for continuing his preachings. Here a *yogi*, who was famous for his yogic tricks, appeared before him with his disciples and challenged his spiritual accomplishments but in the competition that followed he acknowledged his superiority in the spiritual powers and became his disciple to become famous as Pandit Baba Kamal. Malik Mahmood, his family and followers and the inhabitants of the locality soon became his disciples. The *khanqah* established by him was named as Roohabad and subsequently got fame as Kichchhochha. It was here that Syed Ashraf used to deliver his discourses on Islamic *bhakti* and attainment of spiritual upliftment. He also visited different places around it and sometimes also to the far-off villages and towns to persuade the masses to reform their conducts and ways of life. Not only the number of his followers began to increase but the people and saints of far-off places also began to visit his *khanqah* for training and spiritual betterment.[37] Among the places visited by him during the course of his preachings, particular mention is made of some prominent places of Awadh such as Ayodhya, Rudauli, Asoomau, Jais, Inhauna, Kantoor, Sanjauli, Lucknow, Sidhdhaurah, Banaras and the adjoining villages of all these places. One thing is particularly noticed that besides the masses, he also made contacts with the high officials, nobles, ulemas, saints, priests, scholars and other learned men. He held free and frank discussions and debates with them and convinced them to adopt the path of justice and righteousness. A number of persons became his disciples after getting their doubts removed and convinced by his plausible and effective reasoning. He was also very keen to pick up suitable persons for making them his special disciples and after their training under his care he deputed them to a number of places for continuing his work. During those days leanings and attitude of an influential person was generally imitated by his followers. He exploited this also and whenever a particular person became his disciple, his followers followed suit. He impressed upon the people that the real remembrance of God was to conduct one's life according to the will of God irrespective of the post and position one was holding and when one high noble desired to renunciate the world and become a *darvesh*, he scented monasticism in his intentions and discouraged him to do that on the same ground.[38]

After rounding off his above-mentioned tour, he went to Ayodhya to review the work of his disciple Shamsuddin there and then proceeded to Arabia for pilgrimage. Returning from there he went to Ahmadabad and resided there for two years for preaching. His pleasing manners, kind and sensitive heart and the charm of his persuasive discourses embedded deeply the path of righteousness and justice in the hearts of thousands. He also continued literary debates with the scholars and ulemas and the Shaikh-ul-Islam of the area picked up a lively debate on some topics with him but ultimately he gave up his stance on getting satisfactory answers to his doubts and became his disciple. Thereafter, he passed some time in Gulbarga and returned to Awadh in 770 H (1368-69) to resume preaching there.[39]

After a brief stay at Kichchhochha, he once again travelled to Arabia, Roma, Syria and Palestine. On returning to India, he revisited Deccan, where he lent a helping hand to Khawaja Banda Nawaz Gesudiraz in his preachings and also visited Gujarat for showing the right path to those who had fallen on the evil ways.[40]

His last travel outside India was then undertaken during the course of which he went to Roma, Syria, Palestine, Shiraz, Samnan, Najaf, Kashan, Mashhad, Hirat and Mawra-un-nahr. Returning to India he revisited Uchh, Delhi and Pandoh. Thereafter he passed quite a long time at Jaunpur and made Sultan Ibrahim Sharqi two princes and a number of nobles and ulemas his disciples.[41] He passed his last days at Kichchhochha in preaching[42] and passed away on 28th Muharram, 828 H (20 December 1424).

Teachings: Since the main aim of Syed Ashraf was to bring all and sundry to the path of God, he, as mentioned above, besides the masses, also made contacts with the rulers and nobles of his time like Sultan Ibrahim of Jaunpur, Qazi Shahabuddin Daulatabadi, Qazi-ul-Quzzar of Jaunpur, Shaikh-ul-Islam of Gujarat, and Nawab Saif Khan of Lucknow etc. but he always concentrated on rectifying their general conduct and spiritual life and politely refused to accept their rich presents and *jāgirs.*[43] On the contrary, he impressed upon them that the state and the subjects suffer miserably when the rulers and nobles indulge in the pleasures and pastimes of the world beyond what has been prescribed by God, do not treat their subordinates well, do not dispense even-handed justice and oppress the ryots and exhorted them to behave in everything according to the will of God, to treat and deal with all the units of the state in the same way as one takes care of the different organs of the body and even prescribes schedules of behaviour for them.[44] It had its desired effect and Sultan Ibrahim is mentioned to be a just ruler of his time.[45]

Similarly he expended a lot of his energies in making the ulemas and the learned men of his time not to waste their talents in pursuing and teaching such studies which were purely literary in character but rather to disseminate such knowledge which could either be of practical value to the mankind or, if theological in nature, could lead them to the ways of God in a straightforward manner. He made them also not only to apply it practically in their own lives but also to be a stock zealotly working for persuading the people to give up evil and follow the righteousness. For that purpose, he carried out painstaking debates and discussions not only with them but also with a number of wayward mystics.[46] One finds the names of a lot of such persons who mended their ways in the light of his exhortations and many of them became his successors in different areas to continue his noble mission enthusiastically.[47]

Toeing fully the teaching of *Al-Qurān* to call the people to the ways of God with wisdom and best reasoning, already referred, his sermons had special charm and the audience listened to those spell-bound. He made them more captivating by outpouring the floodgates of his deep knowledge and his oratory had a profound effect on his audience so much so that the people gave up the path of sins and evil doings and adopted a life devoted to noble and loaftier ideals of life.[48]

He laid great emphasis on acquiring learning and education; particularly that of theology without which no seeker of the ways of God could understand the commands of *shariat*, *fiqh* and *tariqat* in the right perspective to benefit from those and could never be safe from deviating to the path of unrighteousness unknowingly. Side by side he insisted upon putting all what had been learnt to practise because without it *ilm* was like a bow without cord. Once he said that it was better to know one command of the *shariat* than to observe thousands of religious rituals.[49]

With regard to monotheism, he preached the unity of God (*tauhid*). Whether one was follower of this belief or not, God had the attributes of *wahdanyat* and *fardaniyat* from eternity to eternity i.e. He was, there was nothing with Him and He is and so He will be and was from eternity to eternity. Believing on the authenticity of the verses of *Al-Qurān* and the sayings of the prophet one follows *tauhid-i-imani* or believing that God is one. Then he touches the level of *tauhid-i-ilmi* when he gets this knowledge further strengthened by means of spiritual meditations and experiences to have a firm belief in it and thus attains the stage of *yaqīn* (belief).[50] Then he passes on to the stage of *tauhid-i-hali*. At this stage the believer becomes so much engrossed with the *tajalli* of God that he sees nothing but He along with *Zat* (*tajalli*) and *sifat* (qualities), the latter of which he observes over and above all of his own qualities and things and finds himself just a drop in the limitless ocean of *tauhid*. Such a feeling is attained through the light of observations and it is in this context that Syed Ashraf calls himself to be a follower of the concept of *wahdat-ul-wajood.* It is this engrossment of the believer at this stage of his spiritual trance that he finds *hama-oo-ast* and the suffix of *hali* with *tauhid* clearly testifies that it is an ecstatic experience and that is why it is addressed to the ulemas, learned men and the Sufis and not the masses, who cannot fathom its intricacies.[51] It is, therefore, clear that it is such a state in which if one hears, hears it from God; if sees, sees God; if speaks, speaks only to God; if takes, takes from God; if says, says to God or in short he sees but God in everything simply because his absorbment is so perfect that except He everything else disappears from his sight and except He he sees nothing and it is *fananiyat* or *fana-fi-Allah* or *fana-fi-it-tauhid* or *wahdat-ul-wajood* (*hama-oo-ast*) but at the same time it does not mean that it actually stands for that everything or every iota and object of this world is literally He and rather it is a state of spiritual attainment as if one seeing the sun does not see the stars in the day and which necessarily does not mean that the stars have ceased to exist and moreover an object from eternity to eternity (God) cannot be confined in a perishable object like all that is in the world which will perish on the Day of Judgement (*qayamat*) and as will be seen further Syed Ashraf was not an advocate of anything which was contrary to *shariat* even by a hair's breadth.

One who is fully acquainted with the above-discussed *tauhid* and is fully engrossed in his devotion to God is a *vali*, for whom it is necessary that he should be a learned man and not ignorant, his activities and doings should be fully in consonance with the *shariat* and *tariqat* and he be a total follower of the life-style and imitator of the qualities of Prophet Muhammad. He should be honey-tongued, decent in behaviour, charitable and selfless. Taking out of him all that is condemnable. He should plant himself at the pinnacle of all good qualities and he should become without any want except He. According to him, all kinds of *auliya-allahs* (friends of God) i.e. Ghaus, Amamans, Autads, Ahdals, Akhyars, Abrars, Naqbas, Najbas, Maktoomans, or Mufarradats can never attain *fana-fi-allah* unless and until they are not the imitators of Prophet Muhammad's visible and invisible behaviour, sayings, doings and the spiritual attainments leading to ecstasy of *hal.*[52] He made it explicitly clear that if any one of them would do contrary to the path and *shariat* conveyed by Prophet Muhammad he would never attain his goal and that is why he advocated that *tariqat* was not something over and above or contrary anything contained in *shariat* and the Sufis had derived their spiritual observances, change of attitude and behaviour and purification of heart and soul from the verses of *Al-Quran.*[53]

The duty of a *vali* was to call the people to the path of God but he should perform this with the permission of his preceptor, have attained full devotion and nearness of God, be able to rectify the conduct and raising the spiritual level of his pupils and maintain his own conduct at par with the *shariat.*[54] He should be able to gauge the capacity of his pupils and should prescribe ways and means or level of their spiritual attainments in the light thereof and should never have an eye or benefiting in any way from the property and affluence of his pupils. He should be charitable and his sayings and doings be akin. His state of trance should not be out of his control and he should try to develop it in such a manner that he does not cross the limits of *shariat* and not have a desire to prescribe modes of preferential respect or homage of his pupils other than what is permissible.[55]

To the pupils he taught that they should never hide anything from their preceptor, be true seekers of the path of God, should not copy his doings without his permission, not find unnecessary justifications or explanations for his sayings and doings contrary to *shariat* and respect to whom he considers superior or pays respect.[56] The training of the pupil begins with a pledge to refrain from all that is undesirable in the hand, heart and soul like jealousy, falsehood, miserliness, greediness, anger, pride etc., and a strict adherence to the tenets of *shariat*, which he is required to follow with perfect devotion and within the limits of conduct prescribed therein. Similarly in performing his obligatory religious rituals like *namaz*, *roza*, *haj* and *zakat* (paying of prescribed money to the poor and needy) etc. or in social behaviour or other doings like taking food and hospitality he taught them that they should lay emphasis on the strict adherence to *shariat* and perfect devotion.[57] With regard to spiritual upliftment of the pupil, he reveals that it begins with the purification of heart and soul and as much it becomes pure as high he attains upliftment. His inner eyes become wide open and he begins to see the light, which begins with the red colour, giving way to white and green and lastly as bright as the sun and then it is hard to fix eyes upon it. When the reflection of this light falls on that of soul, all the curtains of the heart and soul disappear and one then becomes engrossed in the *tajalli* of God.[58]

However, the most important thing which he advocated for the preceptors and their pupils was that they should not only be pious and followers of the path of God but should also persuade others to do that[59] and also launch a sort of crusade to wipe out unnecessary social customs and traditions.[60] He encouraged his pupils to do the service of the mankind even at the cost of their own ease and comfort and he asked them to do some sort of work for earning their livings rather than living on the bounty or charity of others touching to the level of beggary and told them to spend even their earnings for the mitigation of sufferings of the mankind.[61] He told them and the masses that walking for even two steps for the service of mankind was to save one from the wrath of God on the Day of Judgement and he should do all that considering it to be a primary duty for him from God.[62] He advocated not only to his own pupils but also to each and every individual to persuade others to do good and to make the people to refrain from all that was bad.[63]

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[5] Ibid., 15:9; 25:1; 34:28.

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[9] Ibid., 51:56.

[10] Ibid., 3:191.

[11] Ibid., 2:112, 177, 208; 9:109.

[12] Ibid., 2:83, 177, 215; 4:36; 17:26; 30:38.

[13] A famous saying of Prophet Muhammad, found in every standard work of his sayings (*Hadis*).

[14] *Al-Qurān*, 3:110; 4:112; 7:199; 19:71; 103:3.

[15] Ibid., 2:256.

[16] Ibid., 3:20; 5:92; 6:48.

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[59] Ibid., I, 147-48.

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9

Medieval Bhakti Movements in Gujarat

MANJULA BHATTACHARYYA

The territory now known as Gujarat was extended in olden times from Rajasthan in the north to the Lāṭa region in the south. It consisted of independent and semi-independent principalities with uneven sizes and changing boundaries. Prominent among these was the Kathiawar peninsula, the land of the Kathis, which was known in ancient times as Ānarta or Saurashtra. The present Kutch was included in it. Apart from these, the historic towns of Dvaraka and Bhṛgukaccha (Broach) as well as those of Surat and Ahmadabad were also integral parts of Gujarat. Although politically fragmented, from a purely cultural point of view there was a basic unity throughout the whole region in which were also included parts of Rajasthan, the region around Sirohi or rather Palanpur in the north, Thar Parkar in Sind and Daman on the banks of the Damanganga river in the south. The cultural horizon of Gujarat, which had transgressed its present geopolitical boundary, was extended, initially, through the medium of language and literature. From the heyday of Apabhraṃśa literature the early Gujarati language had presented an unbroken tradition in association with early Rajasthani and Sindhi. The Jain polymath Hemacandra (AD 1088-1173) had collected over 100 couplets in the Apabhraṃśa of his time, and these have been claimed by the historians of Hindi, Rajasthani and Gujarati languages as specimens of their earlier forms.

This cultural unity, as is revealed by the languages, suggests that the origin and development of the *bhakti* movement in this region should not be treated in isolation without any reference to the adjacent regions, especially to Rajasthan. Apart from language there were other aspects which had strengthened this cultural bond. The vast area was once under the influence of brahminical culture, as a consequence of which brahminical social institutions and religio-philosophical ideas had a deep impact upon the mind of the people. Subsequently the whole region came under the sway of

Jainism, probably owing to the influence of the mercantile communities and the patronage of kings and feudatories. In fact early Gujarati literature was the creation of the Jains. Jainism in Gujarat and parts of Rajasthan could reach the grassroot level owing to its supreme insistence on the duties of the lay devotees which comprised four kinds of gifts to be offered to the distressed, viz., food (*āhāra*), protection (*abhaya*), medicine (*auṣadha*) and learning (*śāstra*). In fact, the functioning of Jain charitable institutions contributed a lot to the material upliftment of the masses, and it is interesting to note that the Vīraśaivas of Karnataka had also borrowed these measures from the Jains in order to reach the common people.

But historically it has also to be admitted that notwithstanding serious attempts of the Jains to remain with the people, the growth of rigid institutionalism among the Jains, especially owing to the patronage of the princes and feudatories, the zeal of propagation had received a diminishing importance. They had an elevated social position owing to their prosperity in trade and commerce, to which profession they mostly belonged. They had a rapprochement with the brahminical tradition and culture and they even did not hesitate to employ brahmin priests for their own cults and rituals. They also devised a form of caste system. In fact from the twelfth century onwards Jainism in Gujarat had ceased to be a progressive social force. Side by side there was influx of Islam. For a long time the Gurjara Pratīhāra rulers resisted the Muslim invasions with considerable success. But they could not resist the cultural conquest of Islam which was exerting tremendous influence on the mind of the people owing to its egalitarian principles. Existing brahminism and Jainism did not prove sufficient for ideological combat with Islam. A spirit of rethinking in regard to the insufficiency of the existing condition had thus become obvious, and this spirit was voiced by the exponents of the medieval *bhakti* movements in Gujarat.

The genesis and development of the *bhakti* movement in Gujarat and Rajasthan cannot be dissociated from similar developments in other parts of India. The movement launched in north India by Rāmānanda, Kabir, Rabidāsa, etc. had sent waves in Gujarat and Rajasthan as well. The southern *bhakti* movements, based on the theistic interpretations of Vedānta, were also able to exert influence on Gujarat. The Marathi *bhakti* movements launched by the

Mahānubhavīs and Virakāri-panthīs also had contributions to the development of *bhakti* movement in Gujarat. The Gujarati *bhakti* movement was centred on a renovated concept of Kṛṣṇa-Viṣṇu as a personal deity who could be easily approached by simple love and devotion. The Kṛṣṇa legends were very popular in Gujarat, especially because the city of Dvaraka was his seat. In Jain tradition Kṛṣṇa was also acknowledged as a divine entity. In the north Indian *bhakti* movements the central figure was Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu who had also been equated with Rāma. The Caitanya movement of Bengal was Kṛṣṇa-oriented. The same held good in the case of the southern *bhakti* movements. The Mahanubhava-panthīs of Maharashtra were worshippers of Kṛṣṇa. It is also interesting to note that Cakradhara, the founder of this sect, was originally a brahmin from Gujarat.

In Gujarat and Rajasthan Vaiṣṇavite *bhakti* movements came in two waves. The pan-north Indian wave was due to the influence of Rāmānanda and his followers, while the second wave was from the south led by the Vallabha movement. A follower of Rāmānanda, Bhālan (AD 1494-1554) led the foundation of an elaborate *bhakti* movement through his literary pursuits in Gujarati language. A translator of Bāṇa's classic *Kādambarī*, he was well-versed in the epics and Purāṇas from which he churned various *ākhyānas* or episodes dealing with various aspects of the *bhakti* cult. These *ākhyānas* were so popular that they became a typical medium of literary expression. Bhālan was also influenced by Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda* and Bopadeva's *Harilīlāmṛta* and his own *Saptaśatī* he gave a new dimension to the folk-songs relating to the love sports of Kṛṣṇa. Bhālan also wrote in Braja-bhāṣā which testifies his special attraction towards the *madhura-rasa* of Vaiṣṇavism. The *ākhyānas* of Bhālan became so popular that there developed a class of professional bards called *gāgariābhaṭs* who used to sing them in public. Among other poets of the *bhakti* tradition, Keśava Hṛdayarāma (*c.* AD 1536) and Nākar (*c.* AD 1550) composed similar *ākhyānas* from the Purāṇic tradition under the shadow of Bhālan's influence.

Mirabai (AD 1498-1546) and Narasiṃha Mehta (AD 1500-80), the two greatest exponents of the *bhakti* movement of Gujarat, appear to have been influenced by the Vṛndāvana school founded under the inspiration of Śrī Caitanya. Numerous devotional songs of Mira are sung all over India even today. According to the tradition Mira was the daughter of Raja Ratan Singh and the daughter-in-law of Maharana Sanga of Mewar. She was devoted to Kṛṣṇa whom she used to call Giridhārīlāla from her childhood. She is said to have been initiated into the doctrine of pure *bhakti* by the saint Ravidasa who was one of the twelve principal followers of Rāmānanda. She began her life as an ordinary housewife and lived in mundane happiness for a period of about ten years. After the death of her husband Bhoja her troubles began. Driven by the unjust behaviour of her brother-in-law, she first sought refuge in her father's home, but finally she had to denounce worldly life and settle at Dvaraka in Gujarat. Her earlier songs addressed to Giridhārilāla were written in pure homely Rajasthani, the parent of modern Gujarati, Mewari and Marwari, whereas her later songs have the impress of Braja-bhāṣā. Mira regarded herself as a *gopī* of Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana, having the pleasure of hearing time and again the sweet strains of Kṛṣṇa's magic flute and the ecstatic glimpses of his eternal *rāsalīlā* or the love-sport. There is an anecdote abour her meeting with Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī who was the nephew of Rūpa and Sanātana and was widely acclaimed as the interpreter of the tenets of Caitanyite *bhaktism*. It is said that the disciples of Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī stopped her at the door telling her that their teacher was reluctant to see any woman's face. At this Mira replied that Vṛndāvana or Braja was the land of only one male who could be none other than Kṛṣṇa and those who did not believe in it with all sincerity were not competent enough to stay there. Overhearing this, the learned Śri Jiva Gosvāmī was brought to sense and he cursed himself saying that hitherto he was in the stagnancy of dry knowledge and that Mirabai had opened his eyes. He himself came out to pay homage to her. The songs of Mirabai claimed three regions and three languages. The earliest collection of her hundred songs increased to more than a thousand. Not all of these songs were composed by Mira herself. Later poets and devotees of Mira also composed devotional songs which they attributed to her name. The rare intensity of feeling, sensitiveness of emotion, saintliness and poetic fervour of her songs have made them transgress the limits of time and space and they are equally popular even today as they had been four hundred years ago.

The central figure of the medieval *bhakti* movement in Gujarat was Narasiṃha Mehta. Previously his date was fixed between AD 1414 and 1480, but now he has been placed between AD 1500 and 1580.

An erudite student of Advaita Vedānta and gifted poet of the first order, Narasiṃha had made a conscious attempt to bring a spiritual renaissance in Gujarat. His approach was based both on *jñāna* (knowledge) and on *bhakti* (devotion). He appears to have been influenced both by the saints and poets of north India and by those of Maharashtra and Karnataka, especially by Jñānadeva and Nāmadeva. The similarity of his views with those of Śrī Caitanya was probably due to his association with the Caitanyite Vaiṣṇava saints of Vṛndāvana. It is also to be remembered that Śrī Caitanya himself visited Gujarat and it was not imporbable that he had some followers there with whom Narasiṃha came in touch. His poems on the love of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopis* recall the Caitanyite approach to the Divine, the latter standing for all human souls passionately seeking union with Kṛṣṇa, the universal soul. Though a brahmin by birth, Narasiṃha did not believe in caste-distinction and untouchability. He mixed freely with the untouchables, whom he used to call Harijan or the men of God. The term Harijan was his coinage which was later adopted by Mahatma Gandhi. The liberal teachings of Narasiṃha Mehta had a great impact not only on the religious life of the masses, but also on the intellectuals of his time and after. About his well known song *vaiṣṇava jana to tine kahiye* Gandhiji wrote: "That one song is enough to sustain me, even if I were to forget the *Bhagavadgitā*." Narasiṃha Mehta's personal life was that of a lone crusader. Domestic calamities could not destroy his spirit. For his unconventional views and his intimacy with the untouchables he was disowned by his own community of Nāgara brahmins. He was deserted by his own relatives. Notwithstanding all the hostilities he was unshaken in his faith of love. "Believe me, all worldly pleasure was shadowy. All things except Kṛṣṇa are ephemeral." He sang it joyfully. Narasiṃha's works consist of *padas* and these are about 740 in number. These have been collected in an anthology called *Śṛṅgāramālā*. His *Rasasahasrapadī* is a free and elaborate rendering of *rasa* as depicted in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* which also became a source of his large volume of poems relating to the episodes of Kṛṣṇa's life. Like Śrī Caitanya Narasiṃha Mehta had a number of biographers in Gujarati, prominent among whom was Premānanda (AD 1636-1724), the greatest among the medieval poets of Gujarat, author of as many as fifty-seven works.

Another exponent of the *bhakti* movement in Gujarat was Akho or Akhā Bhagat (AD 1615-74). Unlike Narasiṃha Mehta, his fame did not transgress the geographical limits of Gujarat, though we come across Hindi version of a good number of his poems. Except some legendary accounts, the story of his life is also in dark. All that is known of him is that he came from the family of a goldsmith and lost his parents in his childhood. His wife and sister passed away as a result of which he lost interest in worldly life. He used to earn his livelihood as a mint-worker, and was imprisoned on false charge. In order to get rid of mental agony he resorted to religion, but the conventional religious practices failed to give him any peace of mind. He travelled in different places of pilgrimage, but all these were of no avail. Eventually at Varanasi he began to study the Vedānta in which he found solace. Like Narasiṃha, he made a synthesis of *jñāna* (knowledge) and *bhakti* (devotion) and his suppressed feelings like the affluents of a stream coming out the barriers of stone were manifested in the poetry he began to compose. He had his own interpretation of the Vedānta which he had simplified for masses in a poetical language that they can easily be understood and that is why he was popularly called *Vedāntakavisiromaṇi*. His *Akhegītā* is a classic in Gujarati.

As we have pointed out above, although in the medieval period Gujarat and Rajasthan were politically fragmented, the states belonging to both the regions formed part of a single cultural complex. That is why it is not uncommon to find that the saints of Rajasthan had established their centres in Gujarat or those of Gujarat had done the same in Rajasthan. Pipa for example, was the ruler of a small principality in Rajasthan who flourished about the second quarter of the fifteenth century. He was attracted towards the *bhakti* movement and received initiation from Rāmānanda. He left his own kingdom and had undertaken the life of a recluse, preaching the gospel of love and toleration. Eventually he settled in Gujarat and founded a monastery at Pipawat near Dvaraka. Again, Dādū, the most celebrated disciple of Kabir was born at Ahmedabad in Gujarat in 1544 and died in 1603 in the village of Nārāna in Rajasthan where his followers have now their chief centre. There were twelve branches of the followers of Kabir in Kathiawar and Gujarat. Among these branches the school of Bhān Saheb in Kathiawar did a great service to the cause of humanity about the first half of the eighteenth century. In Marwar Nāmadeva was an exponent of the *bhakti* movement. He was not the same as the celebrated Nāmadeva of Maharashtra. He was a carder of cotton by profession and his disciples came mostly from the lower orders of society. At Galta near Jaipur was the centre of Anantānanda who was a follower of Rāmānanda, though not a direct disciple. His monastery exists even now. In the Bikaner region of Rajasthan the Alakhnāmīs became a religious community under Lālbag. They did not believe in the caste hierarchy and idol-worship. According to them the supreme being is *alakh*, the invisible one that cannot be perceived by senses. They greet each other with the word *alakh-kaho*. The Lāldâsi sect was founded by Lāldāsa of the Meo tribe of Rajasthan. This sect was influenced by Kabir and Dādū. The followers of this sect do not believe in rituals and they show their devotion in singing and reciting the name of God.

Among the exponents of medieval *bhakti* movements Dādū stands next to Kabir who actually thought of a religious syncretism. He was one of those hwo laid greatest emphasis on the unity of religion between the Hindus and the Muslims. The tradition of Kabir was continued by him. He is regarded as a great poet and his works show an admixture of Braja-bhāṣā and Khari-boli as in the case of Kabir. Dādū founded the Parabrahma Sampradāya with a view to uniting different faiths in one bond of love and comradeship. He admitted both Hindus and Muslims as his disciples. Two of his eminent disciples were Sundaradasa and Rajjab. At his order his disciples made a collection of the devotional writings which included many hymns even of the Muslim saints like Kazi Kadam, Shaikh Farid, Kazi Mohammad, Shaikh Bahawad, Bakhna and others. This anthology of religious literature of different sects was compiled in the closing years of the sixteenth century. It was perhaps the first anthology in the religious literature of the world in which the views of a great variety of religious sects have been collected. The second of this kind is probably the *Granth Sahib* which was compiled in AD 1604, one year after Dādū's death. By profession Dādū was a cotton-cleaner. He inculcated devotion to Rāma and meditation on him. His followers were divided into three classes, namely, the *viraktas* or ascetics, the *nagas* who were bearers of arms and entered into the service of the princes and the *vistaradhārins* who were ordinary householders.

In Gujarat and Rajasthan the sect of Vallabhācārya (AD 1473-1531) had got the largest number of followers among the rich trading and cultivator classes. According to Vallabha, the universe is the effect of *brahman* and is real and non-different from him. It represents the *ādhibhautika* (material) form of *brahman*. The element of *sat* (existence) is manifest in it, while the other elements of *cit* (consciousness) and *ānanda* (bliss) are latent. The Lord has created the universe out of his own self for the sake of sport (*līlā*) without undergoing any change whatsoever (*avikṛtapariṇāma*), and is related to it as the spider is to its web. Vallabha's system is known as Śuddhādvaita (pure non-dualism) which also emphasises *puṣṭi* (divine grace) as the most powerful and unfailing means of enjoying the highest bliss. This divine bliss is purely a gift of the Lord and cannot be obtained by any human effort. The best illustration of *puṣṭi* or divine grace is found in the case of the *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana. With them the Lord had played by keeping himself subordinate to them and giving them the pleasure of his company. This bliss of his company is known as *svarūpānanda* or the bliss of the Lord himself. The best form of emotional relation of the Lord and his devotee is *śṛṅgāra*, that between a lover and his beloved. It has two aspects, namely, *samyoga* or union in which the devotee enjoys the happiness of his company, and *viprayoga* or non-union in which the devotee suffers from the feeling of separation from his company.

The Vallabha sect had a remarkable influence in northern India on account of the activities of its followers like Hita Harivaṃsa, Haridasa Svami, Śrībhaṭṭa and, above all, Tulsidas. The ideas of Vallabha were given a new tone and colour by his son Viṭṭhalanātha (AD 1516-76) who insisted more on the Rādhā cult. He engaged Kumbhandāsa, Surdāsa, Paramānandadāsa and Kṛṣṇadāsa, four of the disciples of his father, and Govindasvāmī Chitasvāmī, Caturbhujadāsa and Nandadāsa, four of his own disciples, to compose songs celebrating the love of Radhā and Kṛṣṇa. These eight poets were collectively called Aṣṭa Chāpa. Viṭṭhala undertook extensive proselytising tours to Dvaraka, Kutch, Malwa, Mewar and other parts of Rajasthan and Gujarat and made numerous disciples. Of these, 252 were most prominent. Viṭṭhala finally settled at Gokul. He had seven sons, each of whom had established his *gaddi* or own seat of teaching in Rajasthan, Gujarat and the neighbourhood of Mathura.

The influence of the Vallabha sect was to a great extent responsible for the spread of *bhakti* movement in Gujarat and Rajasthan. Vallabha believed in the principles of equality and liberalism and as such the Vallabhite movement had a great possibility of reaching to the masses. But this did not happen owing to the fact that the spiritual leadership of this sect was monopolised by the descendants of Viṭṭhala as a result of which the circle of expansion was narrowed and was restricted to sporadic groups under hereditary teachers. Other disciples and admirers of Vallabha formed their own sects. But in ideological level the doctrine of Vallabha was never a spent force. It attracted numerous medieval saints who made further improvement on it in the light of their own experience, but they found it better to preach in their own ways and in their own areas quite independently.

10

Narasiṃha Mehta: Saint-Poet from Gujarat

UMA S. DESHPANDE

Personal Life and Works

Narasiṃha Mehta is regarded as the father of Gujarati poetry although several works have been composed in Gujarati language much earlier than him. This may be due to the number of facts like the popularity of his simple yet meaningful poems, his lyrical, devotional songs gracefully depicting the divine sports of Kṛṣṇa and indelible impression of his eventful life frequently graced by the bountiful divine help on the minds of the common people of Gujarat. In fact Narasiṃha Mehta as a *bhakta* and a poet has all through these centuries been held in very high esteem by the devotees of God all over India.

Narasiṃha Mehta himself has written about some important incidents of his life; some of his successors like Viṣṇudāsa, Viśvanātha, Premānanda etc. have also written a number of poems on his life and personality.

Narasiṃha Mehta was born in Talaja near Junagadh in Saurashtra, Gujarat in AD 1414.* He was the younger son of Kṛṣṇadāsa, Vadnagar, and a Nāgar by caste. Narasiṃha Mehta lost his parents at a very young age and was left dependent on his elder brother. From his young age he loved to meet holy men and ascetics visiting Junagadh on the way to Girnar, a holy mountain in Gujarat, and listen to their *bhajans* (devotional songs) and religious discourses. He regularly associated himself with itinerant *sādhus* and pilgrims and was introduced by them to the mysteries of the *bhakti* of God Kṛṣṇa. He used to sing, dance and behave like a *gopī* and began to look upon God Kṛṣṇa as a lover. This conduct shocked his relations and family members.

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*The traditional date of Narasiṃha Mehta is 1414-80, but according to K.M. Munshi it should be 1500-80. See his *Gujarat and its Literature*, Bombay, 1967, pp. 199-200. The hearsay that Narasiṃha had same affiliation with the Caitanya movement, especially with the Vṛndāvana school of Caitanyaism, may become relevant if the second date be accepted.—Editor.

Being incapable of making money, he was made to lead a life of humiliation. Disgusted with the treatment meted out to him and hurt by the sarcastic remarks made by his brother's wife, the young Narasiṃha Mehta left the house, repaired to a jungle, came across a Śiva-liṅga (Gopanātha) that had been left neglected for a long time. He worhipped it devoutly for a few days and went to Dwarka where, according to the legends, he saw the *rāsa-līlā* of god Kṛṣṇa. Humbly he held the torch while his Lord danced with the *gopīs*. Henceforth he had a continuous living contact with the Divine.

At the sight of the divine dance, the narratives state, his eyes were stunned, his heart was enthralled and his whole inner and outer world totally changed. He then went and thanked his brother's wife for the favour she had done to him. "Blessed are you, my brother's wife. You spoke harsh words and because of them I saw the dance of the Lord of cowherds in Gokul and I could experience His loving friendship and intimacy with me." The direct perception of the almighty God transformed an ordinary man to a poet of genius, philosopher with vision and saint endowed with the overflowing love for the God.

He left his brother's house and set up a home of his own along with his wife Manekbai in a small old house. It is identified by tradition with a spot now known as Narasiṃha Mehtano-choro in Junagadh. Manekbai bore him a daughter Kunvarbai and later a son Shamala. The family was maintained by the generosity of the religious-minded people in the town.

To the people who rebuked him for his wayward behaviour and devotional fervour causing indifference to the worldly affairs he humbly replied:

> Such am I verily such am I. I am exactly such a one as you describe. In the whole world I am the only stupid man. I am deeply in love with my Lord and the Vaiṣṇavas.

As he sang the glory of the God day and night, people gathered around him and gradually a large number of them became the devotees of the God. He composed *padas* and *bhajans* mainly devotional, ethical, philosophical and mystical. He spent all his time in singing them in simple musical tune to the accompaniment of his cymbals. Ever happy and intoxicated with pure *bhakti*, he lived in an imaginary world more real to him than the reality of the worldly life.

Kunvarbai married and gave birth to a child. Her father had to give her husband's people presents (by way of *mosala*). Then Shamal had to be married. All these ceremonials and social customs meant money. The poor Mehta owned nothing but his unalterable faith in the God. His kith and kin laughed at the penniless fool who believed that his God would help him. But someone always came forward with timely assistance for the godly man. Assistance so rendered came to be regarded as miraculous and the miracles were sung by later poets with faith and feeling.

Once Narasiṃha Mehta received money and drew a *hundi* on Lord Kṛṣṇa at Dwarka and Kṛṣṇa himself honoured the bill of exchange. Again Ra Mandalika, the king of Junagadh called the poet and to test his sainthood asked him to get a garland from his Lord before morn threatening him with dire penalties if he failed to do so. He prayed the whole night and Lord Kṛṣṇa who, just as the dawn broke, gave him the coveted garland.

Domestic calamities overtook the poet. His wife died and later his son. His daughter became a widow. But the devout poet was happy as ever, unshaken in his faith and love for the God. He boldly announced:

> Believe me, all worldly happiness is like a shadow. All objects except Kṛṣṇa are ephemeral.

He led a life thoroughly dedicated to God Kṛṣṇa. Singing happily the glory, greatness and grandeur of his divine lover, urging the people to live the life of devotion and dedication and totally submerged in the supreme, sublime *bhakti-rasa* he left his mortal body in *c*. AD 1480.

The Works of Narasiṃha Mehta

For centuries together the *padas* and *bhajans* of Narasiṃha Mehta have been handed down orally. They include *Hara-mala, Shamalshano Vivaha, Govinda gamana, Surata saṅgrāma, Sudāmācarita, Rāsa Sahasrapadī* etc.

The authorship of several *padas* attributed to Narasiṃha Mehta is doubtful and particularly doubtful is the authorship of the *Hara-mala* depicting the event when God Kṛṣṇa is said to have given him a garland of flowers while he was confined in a solitary cell.

Several poems of Narasiṃha Mehta relate to the episodes in Lord Kṛṣṇa's life as described in the canto X of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa. Śrī Kṛṣṇajanma* deals with the miraculous birth of the God, *Bāl-līlā* with his sports as a child and *Nāga-Daman* with the well known incident of his bringing back a ball fallen into the river Yamunā, vanquishing a venomous cobra therein. *Dānalīlā* and *Mānalīlā* relate the story of how God Kṛṣṇa extracted the toll of curds from the *gopis*. *Sudāmācarita* is the story of an old friend, needy and poor who went to seek the aid of his bosom friend Śri Kṛṣṇa. *Govindāgamana*, departure of Govinda, relates the episode of Akrur taking away God Kṛṣṇa from Gokul.

These were composed at different periods of his life, the last one was composed as he himself tells us in his old age.

Suratasaṅgrāma describes the love-battle between God Kṛṣṇa and his cowherd friends on the one side and Rādhā and her female friends on the other. *Rāsasahasrapadī* consists of about 123 *padas.* The poem begins by describing the *gopīs* as they came dressed up for the *rāsa*. The entire group of the *padas* grow more picturesque, now describing the reason, now depicting the condition of some *gopīs* and now singing Lord Kṛṣṇas's glory for whom Narasiṃha Mehta was a torch-bearer in the *rāsa* play. *Prabhātiyans* are the morning prayers. Almost every house in Gujarat hums and resounds with Narasiṃha Mehta's melodious, rhythmic and sweet devotional songs to be sung at daybreak: "Awake my Yādava, awake my cowherd Kṛṣṇa who but you will lead these herds of cows to the grazing grounds."

Narasimha Mehta: A Devotee of God Kṛṣṇa

As defined by the God Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavadgitā* (ch. XII) Narasiṃha Mehta was a true and ardent devotee of the God. *Bhakti* to him was an end in itself. He said: "*Bhakti* is a rare and unique thing in this world, certainly not to be had even in the Brahmaloka."

He defied the existing formulae of life and surrendered himself totally at the feet of his master.

He was the man who cheerfully bore the cross of worldly afflictions, the saint whose heart went to all high and low, and a devout poet whose esoteric experience expressed itself in noble and turching eloquence, making his poetry a living source of faith and inspiration. He declared: "The man who knows not the Supreme

Soul that dwells within him, who sees not the essence of all things has wasted his life, precious as the *cintāmaṇi* jewel."

Again following the *Gītā* (X. 25) Narasiṃha Mehta declared: "Taking His name serves the purpose of the boat to cross this unfathomable mundane ocean."

One of the most magnificent of his *bhajans* is that which defines a Vaiṣṇava Jana, a man of God. One of Mahatma Gandhi's favourite prayers, it characterizes philanthropic, straightforward, devout and pious personality of a Vaiṣṇava Jana.

In one of his popular *bhajans* he compares a common man having egoism with a dog under a moving cart thinking that the former is pulling on the cart: "*Hun karu hun karu eja ajnanata shaktano bhar jyam shwaan taane.*"

As Lord Kṛṣṇa assures Arjuna of His devotee's perfect well-being in the *Gītā* (IX. 22), similarly Narasiṃha Mehta urges the people to meditate on Him to get rid of all the miseries of the worldly life.

Narasiṃha Mehta believed and followed *premalakṣaṇa-bhakti* marked by the unflinching highest love and dedication to the God: "Talk of Kṛṣṇa, speak about Kṛṣṇa and you get real joy by repeating His name."

Apart from *bhakti* he did not even desire for the *mokṣa*. Narasiṃha Mehta was a *jñānī-bhakta*, endowed with the supreme knowledge of the reality. He could perceive Him in each and every sentient and non-sentient object in the world. "In the whole universe, O Hari you are the only reality, varied and infinite, you are the wind, you are the water, you are the earth, mountain and the tree blossomed up to the sky." He sang.

As characterized by the *Gītā*, a saint like Narasiṃha Mehta would not distinguish the people on the basis of their class, creed or colour. Narasiṃha Mehta went to the hamlets of Pariahs and sang along with them the whole night the *bhajans* glorifying God Kṛṣṇa. Consequently when his castemen laughed and ridiculed him, he retorted to them:

Where distinctions come in God departs
To the eyes of the dispassionate, all are equal.

In short, Narasiṃha Mehta like Mirabai and Caitanya Mahāprabhu, unequivocally practised and explained the Bhakti-yoga, the only royal way to achieve delight and bliss here and hereafter. "What avails it if one takes bath and offer worship? What avails it to sit in the house and give money in charity. What use is it to have studied all the six philosophies? These are but tricks to gain a living." He proclaimed. Narasiṃha further says: "When you forget I and you then alone will the Master help you."

Narasimha Mehta: A Philosopher and Mystic

Like Saṅkarācārya, the propounder of absolute monism, losing his own identity at the feet of the Godhead, saying: "Even if it is true that there is no duality between us Oh Lord, I am because of you and not for me. A wave spring from the ocean and not a vice versa."

So Narasiṃha Mehta proclaimed: "I bow down at His feet and the light of knowledge and dispassion arises."

Like the Upaniṣadic sage, Narasiṃha Mehta perceived and pointed out the omnipresent divinity non-different from the individual self: "Look at the sky and see who pervades it uttering the words 'I am he', 'I am He'."

The *bhakta* of God Kṛṣṇa merges into the philosophic saint expressing the twofold vision in one great world picture.

As Arjuna could behold and describe the cosmic form of the God so did Narasiṃha Mehta: "You are the beginning, Oh Hari you are the end. You alone are real, you alone are real, you alone are real."

Giving the quintessence of Advaita Vedānta Narasiṃha Mehta confessed:

> When I am in wakeful condition there is no world seen by me. It is only in the sleep that different objects of enjoyment appear before me.

How perfectly he has stated his own condition of a *jīvanmukta*, the enlightened soul who could see the relative existence of the empirical world falsified by the cognition of the Supreme Reality at the rise of true knowledge.

Like the mystics as Gauḍapāda, Śaṅkara, Mirabai and the *gopīs* in Gokul Narasiṃha Mehta perceived and felt only the existence of the Supreme divine bliss and nothing else: "That flavour which the ladies in the Vraja could taste is drunk by Narasiṃha as His bosom friend."

As the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (II.3) says, the reality is beyond the mind and speech, so did Narasiṃha Mehta speak: "He, the Lord incomprehensible and indestructible, cannot be known by human beings."

When however he could perceive the beautiful, the grand and the sublime Reality he ceased to be a separated being. *Jīva* got transformed into Śiva.

Narasiṃha Mehta's direct perception of the supercosmic divine dance, the total mingling of his personality into the divine form of the Lord Kṛṣṇa and the experience of the divine grace in his life got him converged from a devotee to a philosopher, and from a philosopher to a mystic.

The Finale

Narasiṃha Mehta apart from an ideal *bhakta* and mystic was a genuine subjective poet. There is an unmistakable ring of sincerity in his poetry. His poetry is not only devotional and philosophical in content but is lyrical and melodious in character like the *Gītāgovinda* of Jayadeva.

The varied poetic forms used by him contain vivid descriptions, appealing advice and sonorous style. The legacy of rich and varied vocabulary, the language of great power and beauty and the vivid pen-pictures of his Master exercised a great influence on the regional literature in Gujarat.

He broke away from the lifeless literary tradition of his days and created his own unique rhetorical poetry. He changed Gujarati poetry from an impersonal to a personal creative art.

What he saw and lived, he sang and glorified in his *padas* and *bhajans*. A noble poet, a visionary philosopher, an apostle of Aryan culture and a favourite devotee of the God—Narasiṃha Mehta was and is a unique personality who still continues to guide and inspire the people on the path of spiritual progress.

11

Sant Prāṇnāth and the Praṇāmī Sect

P.S. MUKHARYA

Sant Prāṇnāth was perhaps the last in the glorious tradition of those *sants* (saints) of medieval India who worked for Hindu-Muslim unity. Besides, he also laid a solid foundation of the synthesis of all religions for the first time in India. While *sants* like Kabir, Nanak, Raidas, Dādū etc. have received full attention in the hands of the historians, the historicity and the contribution of Prāṇnāth and the Praṇāmī sect remains comparatively an unexplored field. Historians have paid scant and inadequate attention to it. In this paper an attempt has been made to study the life and times of Sant Prāṇnāth and to provide a broad outline of the Praṇāmī sect.

Nature and Extent of the Source-Material

The primary and original sources of this sect are vast. It has a vast literature behind it in the form of the *Vānī Sāhitya* and the *Vitak Sāhitya.* The *Vānī* or teachings of Sant Prāṇnāth are collected in the *Kulzamswarup* or *Tārtamya Sāgar* which means a vast ocean of knowledge. It is in fourteen volumes or *granthas* with more than eighteen thousand verses. It is sacred like the *Veda,* the *Qurān* or the *Bible* to the followers of this sect who worship it daily as a deity. The *Vitak Sāhitya* contains his biographies (written in verse form) running into hundreds of verses by his learned disciples. There are seven *Vitaks* about him.

Although Prāṇnāth's mother-tongue was Gujarati, he was well acquainted with Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Rajasthani, Hindi etc. His *Kulzamswarup* is a collection of fourteen *granthas* of which four are in Gujarati, one in Sindhi and the rest in Hindi or Hindustani. After his tour of northern and central India he was convinced that Hindustani was understood by a vast majority of people. He then began to write in Hindustani. In medieval India he was the first Hindi poet to use the word *Hindavi* (Hindustani) and considered it as the national as well as a link language. This was not merely a theory. He practised it and his *Vānīs* or teachings in other languages were written in the Devnagari script during his lifetime. All the Praṇāmī literature is in Hindustani written in the Devnagari script.[1]

The Praṇāmīs concealed their literature from the public view for a long time. Before the independence of India it was not opened to those who were not the followers of the sect. The reasons for this are best known to them. Recently it has been opened to the general public. The *Kulzamswarup* was first published in 1965. This had given rise to much misunderstanding about the sect and a proper evaluation has yet to be done by the historians.

It is not possible to go through this vast material for writing this paper as it is a separate subject for research. In this paper a rather sketchy yet connected account of the life and times of Sant Prāṇnāth based on the secondary sources has been traced. At the same time the original sources have been tapped while dwelling on a broad outline of the Praṇāmī sect.

Life Sketch of Devchand

Shri Devchand, the preceptor and *guru* of Sant Prāṇnāth, was the founder of the Nijanand sect in Gujarat in the seventeenth century. It was further expanded in the northern and central India by Prāṇnāth as the Praṇāmī sect with its centres at Jamnagar and Surat (Gujarat) and Paṇna (Madhya Pradesh).

Devchand was born at Amarkot in Sind on 11 October 1581. He belonged to a rich Kayasth family. His father's name was Mattu Mehta and mother's name Kunwarbai. At the age of thirteen he went to Kutch along with his father on a business tour. At Bhojnagar he met Haridas Gusain of the Radhavallabh sect and became his disciple. For three years he studied religious scriptures and many curiosities cropped up in his mind. This study made him uneasy and at the age of sixteen he left his home for Kutch which was famous for religious studies. He met there various pundits and *maulvis* and studied their scriptures. But his religious curiosities were not satisfied.

By a comparative study of various religions, he noticed their underlying unity but could not decide his course of action. He went again to Haridas Gusain at Bhojnagar and began to live with him as he had a vast following and a great influence in Kutch. He belonged to the Radhavallabh sect whose followers worshipped Lord Kṛṣṇa in the form of a child as Bālkṛṣṇa or Bālmukund. They gave importance to his Vrajajlīlā and worshipped him in the *Sakhi bhāva* or in the spirit of a lady friend. They studied the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* as a religious scripture.

As Devchand was away from his home for more than four years, his parents searched him and found him with Haridas Gusain. After a great persuasion they got him married so that he might lead a worldly life. It was a vain effort. Having lived with Haridas Gusain for eight years at the age of twenty-five he went to Jamnagar, where a learned brahmin, Kanhji Bhatt, used to discourse upon the *Bhāgavata* in those days daily. His discourses were very impressive. Devchand, impressed by them, listened *Bhāgavata* daily for fourteen years.

According to Praṇāmī scriptures Devchand obtained *jñāna* or knowledge at Jamnagar at the age of forty. It was based on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. For the propagation of his doctrines he used to narrate the *Bhāgavata* in a very impressive manner.[2] He used to deliver his religious discourses in Khejra Mandir at Jamnagar. It has become a great centre of pilgrimage known as Navtanpuri to the followers of this sect.[3] Very soon he attracted a large following. Amongst his disciples was Mihraj who came to be known as Sant Prāṇnāth afterwards.

Early Life of Sant Prāṇnāth

Sant Prāṇnāth was the second *guru* of this sect. He was born at Jamnagar in Gujarat on 6 September 1618 in a Kṣatriya family. His birth-name was Mihraj. His father was Keshav Thakur, the prime minister of the Jamnagar state. His mother's name was Dhanbai. His elder brother, Govardhan, was a great devotee of Devchand. When he was twelve years of age, Govardhan took him to Devchand. Both of them were attracted towards each other and this mutual attraction resulted in the teacher-and-pupil relationship. He listened to his teachings and studied Vedas and Purāṇas under his direction. In the meantime he was married to Baiji who always accompanied him in his voyages.[4]

During his life-time Devchand entrusted him the task of propagating his message at Basra in Arab as at that time in Kathiawad a large number of Arab traders were having a roaring business. Prāṇnāth went to Basra in 1646 and stayed there for five years. On a business tour he went to Baghdad and met Sultan Imam in person. Here he also met the learned religious Muslims. It resulted in a fair exchange of views. He then began to understand the finer aspects of Islamic theology. He returned to India in 1651.

On his return he worked as the prime minister of Jamnagar after his father's death. In August 1655 when Devchand realised that his end was approaching, he sent for Prāṇnāth. Devchand impressed upon him the essential unity of all religions and the need of proper synthesis between the teachings of different faiths. It was the need of the hour. Caste, creed and such other things had no place in such teachings. He gave him the name Prāṇnāth and asked his followers to call Mihraj as Prāṇnāth. He commissioned Prāṇnāth to the task of propagating his message to everybody irrespective of caste, community, nation or faith to which he belonged. Devchand died in September 1655. On his death Prāṇnāth decided to devote his life for the propagation of the teachings of his *guru* and resigned his post.

The presence of Portuguese and British traders in Kathiawad led to the Anglo-Portuguese influence over him in the study of Christian scriptures. This also broadened his mental horizon. After propagating the teachings of this sect for some time, he left Jamnagar in 1665 for further propagating it in Kathiawad, Kutch and Sind. He toured along the western coast for three years visiting places such as Diu, Navi, Porbander, Kapiabandar, Lathibandar etc. Everywhere he attracted a large number of followers who were initiated into his fold known as Sundersath. Later he stayed at Thatta in Sind for ten months. Here a rich merchant named Laldas became his disciple. He followed Prāṇnāth like a shadow for about thirty years in his missionary journey and wrote *Vitak* after his death according to his wishes.[5] While preaching he used to invite religious discussions and satisfy the curiosities of the listeners. Several times he had to face the religious controversies of the various learned pundits and *maulvis*, Kabirpanthīs, Nanakpanthīs and others. Many were impressed and became his followers.[6]

In 1668, he sailed again towards Arab for its further propagation. He stayed at port-towns of Muscat, Koga, Abbas etc. for a period of three years. After enlightening many in the Arab countries, he returned to Surat in 1672. The visit to Surat by Prāṇnāth is a landmark in the Praṇāmī movement. The place is known as Mangalpuri, another centre of pilgrimage for Praṇāmīs besides Jamnagar. It was at Surat that this sect assumed its widest form as some five hundred Sundersath disciples dedicated themselves to the cause of this sect and worked tirelessly for its propagation.[7]

Aurangzeb's Religious Bigotry

During this time Aurangzeb was ruling India. His religious bigotry had blinded him to the real interests of the country. He was a zealous and fanatic Muslim; hence he turned the territory under him into a veritable hell of persecution for non-Muslims. In 1669 by a *firman* he ordered the demolition of the Hindu temples and schools and reimposed the *jaziya* on the Hindus in 1679 which Akbar had abolished. The wanton destruction of temples took place accompanied by acts of desecration, such as slaughtering of cows and getting the idols trodden down in public places without the least care of the feelings of the Hindus.

The Hindus were highly dissatisfied with the religious bigotry of Aurangzeb. In Deccan Shivaji had successfuly opposed this policy. Its echo was heard everywhere. This anti-Aurangzeb wave had also touched Prāṇnāth. In his preachings he vehemently opposed the religious bigotry of Aurangzeb.[8] He made up his mind to convince the fanatic Aurangzeb about his erroneous ways. With this object in view he left Surat with a large number of his devoted followers.

Towards Delhi

After visiting, Ahmadabad, Broach, Palanpur (Gujarat), Merta (Rajasthan), etc. he reached Delhi. An attempt to convince Aurangzeb was a very risky one but Prāṇnāth was determined to win over his hate and anger by love and affection. At this time in 1678 a Kumbha fair was held at Hardwar which was usually held after an interval of twelve years. At Delhi he selected his twelve disciples of which two were Muslims to work for his cause, to interpret the basic oneness of both the religions to Aurangzeb and left for Hardwar. As at Hardwar there was a congregation of devotees of different faiths, Prāṇnāth had an idea to organise a parliament of learned theologians whereby to impress upon them the essential and basic unity of all religions. Accordingly it was convened. He impressed them so much that they acclaimed him as *Śrī Vijayabhinanda Buddha Niṣkalanka*. As a mark of reverence to him the year 1735 of Vikrama era (AD 1678), the year of his visit to Hardwar was declared by them as *Vijayabhinanda Śaka*—the beginning of a new era. He stayed at Hardwar for four months.

He returned to Delhi to persuade Aurangzeb to give up his persecutory methods against the non-Muslims. At first it was decided to convey his message to the Emperor, not directly but through the five royal courtiers close to him. They were Kazi Sheikh Islam, Rizvi Khan, Amir Auquil Khan, Sheikh Nizam and the Kotwal Siddi Faulad. The draft message contained an appeal to the Emperor which brought out the similarity of approach in the scriptures of Hindus as well as of Muslims. The *Qurān* and several Hindu scriptures were extensively quoted in testimony. But the courtiers paid no attention to it.

Hence it was decided to carry the message to the Emperor in person in spite of all the difficulties in meeting him. Aurangzeb used to visit the Jama Masjid on every Friday when he stayed at Delhi. On the following Friday his twelve disciples met him through the *imam* of the mosque who was very much impressed by their scholarship. Aurangzeb was amazed to find out that Hindus, as most of them appeared to be, had a remarkable scholarship of Islamic scriptures. They appealed to him to give up his misguided policy of persecution of non-Muslims. But their mission failed as Aurangzeb had a suspicious nature and his counsellors kept on poisoning his ears. Moreover, he was in a haste to go to the south to deal with his enemies. Thus Prāṇnāth could not meet Aurangzeb personally even after sixteen months of stay at Delhi and his attempt to convert Aurangzeb not on political lines but like an humble and courageous student of comparative religion failed miserably.

Towards Panna

Prāṇnāth was then in search of a bold and warlike prince who could oppose Aurangzeb. After leaving Delhi, he visited important places like Anupshahar (Uttar Pradesh), Amer, Sanganer, Udaipur (Rajasthan), Mandasaur, Ujjain (Malwa), Burhanpur, Aurangabad (Khandesh), Deogarh, Ramnagar (Madhya Pradesh) etc. for the spread of the Praṇāmī message. Unmindful of the inclemency of weather and the rigours of travel of those days, he moved in northern and central India and thousands of men became his followers.

At this time in Bundelkhand Chhatrasal had started his war of independence against Aurangzeb. He had neither the resources nor the strength of an army to offer resistance. Moreover, Bundelas were yet to be united for the common cause. But Chhatrasal had the strong determination to free Bundelkhand from the persecution of Aurangzeb. The meeting of Chhatrasal with Prāṇnāth was held suddenly at Mau (near Chhatarpur in Madhya Pradesh) in 1683. According to Chhatrasal's letter to his son, Jagatraj, they met in a jungle near Mau when he went there for hunting. At this time Chhatrasal was thirty-four and Prāṇnāth was sixty-five years of age. At the request of Chhatrasal Prāṇnāth stayed permanently in Bundelkhand. He spent about eleven years in Bundelkhand moving from place to place, spreading his message with Panna as headquarters.[9]

Relations of Chhatrasal and Prāṇnāth

The relations of Chhatrasal and Prāṇnāth were like that of Shivaji and Samarth Guru Ramdas. Prāṇnāth having supplied the moral and spiritual need to Chhatrasal in Bundelkhand increased the importance of his political aims. On Shivaji the influence of Ramdas was spiritual rather than political. But Prāṇnāth was politically more helpful to Chhatrasal. In Bundelkhand he created a strong public opinion in Chhatrasal's favour by strongly criticising the reactionary policy of Aurangzeb. He successfully encouraged the public to cooperate with Chhatrasal.

His personality and teachings of non-sectarian and classless society attracted many followers. Many of them were recruited in Chhatrasal's army. Prāṇnāth also used to accompany him in his army campaigns to encourage the soldiers. He also made his financial position strong and sound by giving him the knowledge of diamond mines near about Panna. His financial difficulty was thus removed. On the advice of Prāṇnāth, Chhatrasal made Panna his capital. He conferred the choicest title of Maharaja on Chhatrasal and coronated him for enhancing his prestige in Bundelkhand. He was thus the source of inspiration and strength to Chhatrasal and was the friend, philosopher and guide to him.[10]

Prāṇnāth died at Panna on 29 June 1694. Panna has become a place of pilgrimage to the Praṇāmīs as Padmavati Puri because Prāṇnāth died here. It has become *mukti-dhām* to them. He entrusted the task of spreading the Praṇāmī message to Maharaja Chhatrasal and the entire Sundersath fellowship.[11]

The Praṇāmī Sect

Although the Praṇāmī sect was founded by Devchand, it was organised into a definite order by Prāṇnāth. According to Praṇāmī scriptures the philosophy of this sect was revealed to Devchand by Lord Kṛṣna himself while he was reciting *Śrīmadbhāgavata.* According to this sect the world is divided into two parts, *kṣara* (perishable) and *akṣara* (imperishable). But superior to these two parts is one Supreme God, i.e. Akṣarātīta. It emphasises the worship of Akṣarātīta and prescribes meditation as the best form of worship. The unity of God and the theory of *Karma* has been propounded and idolatory discouraged.[12]

Fifth Synthetic Current of the Medieval Bhakti Literature

Dr. Matabadal Jayaswal, who has done a pioneer research work in the Praṇāmī literature, is of the opinion[13] that this literature formed the fifth synthetic current of the medieval *bhakti* literature in Hindi. Between AD 1400 and 1600 the following four currents had flowed: 1. *Sant* poetry (Kabir, Nanak, Raidas, Dādū etc.), 2. *Sufi* poetry (Jayasi, Manjhan, Kutban etc.), 3. Rāmabhakti (Tulsidas etc.), and 4. Kṛṣṇabhakti (Surdas, Nanddas, Mira etc.). In the seventeenth century all these currents had become weak and a new current flowed in the form of the Praṇāmī literature. For the first time in India this new current emphasized the integration of India and Indian society through the proper synthesis of all the religious scriptures.

Before Prāṇnāth Kabir had repeatedly given the call of unity of Hindus and Muslims but it resulted only in a progressive slogan as he did not give due importance to their religious scriptures. Without the proper synthesis of these scriptures, his efforts for the Hindu-Muslim unity were not successful. The higher society of the educated Hindus and Muslims, therefore, did not accept the Kabir Panth. By criticising the scriptures the uneducated persons belonging to the lower society were attracted towards it. While Kabir had ignored the religious scriptures, the Sufis based their poetry on the old love stories. Tulsidas had talked about the Hindu religious scriptures but criticised the Śākta Dharma and its scriptures. He did not refer the Islamic scriptures at all. Kṛṣṇa Bhakta poets based their poetry on the *Bhāgavata.*

Sarva-Dharma Samanvaya: Synthesis of All the Religions

In the seventeenth century the following religious scriptures were prevalent in India amongst the different communities, *Bible* amongst the Christians, *Qurān* amongst the Muslims; and the Vedas, Upaniṣads, *Gītā*, and *Bhāgavata* amongst the Hindus. Prāṇnāth was well versed in the Hindu scriptures and the *Qurān* and was well acquainted with the Christian scriptures. He knew well that without the proper synthesis of all these scriptures, the call of the unity amongst the different communities would become an empty slogan. He, therefore, raised his philosophical teachings on the solid foundation of the synthesis of all these religious scriptures.[14]

He saw in India Hindus, Muslims, *feranghies* (foreigners), Jews, Buddhists and Jains whose fanaticism and contending philosophies found no spiritual ground in common and only served to flare the flames of mutual destruction as explicit in this verse:[15]

Hindu musalmān re firangī kai jāte, hodi bodi jain apār,
Bāden so broth badhāria, karī agani udekār.

He defined a *sadguru* (true teacher) as one who embraces all religions. He was firmly convinced that all of them talked about the same thing. The ignorant alone sees the difference. He observes:[16]

Sāstra le cale satguru soyi, bāni sekal ko ek arth hoyi,
Sab sayāno kī ekmat pāyi, par ajān dekhen re judāī.

He advised followers of different religions who sing praises of God under different names and put on different clothes not to quarrel amongst themselves as their God is one. He embraced it in a 'Universal Being' as in this verse:[17]

Jude jude nām gāvahī, jude jude bhekh anek.
Jin koyi jhāgḍo āp me, dhanī sabo kā ek.

In his opinion[18] true piety is to love all alike great and small and take the all-embracing Lord as their common protector.

Par sabāb to unko hovhī chotā baḍā sab jīyu.
Ek najro dekh hi, sabkā khābind pīyu.

In the end one more verse[19] of this kind which is particularly significant and claims attention:

Ek sṛṣṭi dhani bhajan ekai, ek gān ek āhār.
Choḍ ke bair mile sab pyār so, bhyā sakal me jai jai kār.

He advised all the contending religious groups to forget their petty differences and radiate an atmosphere of love and mutual understanding since they stand on a common ground with one order of creation, one all-pervading God, one hymn, one note and common food. This done, they are bound to be hailed in the world.

Hindu-Muslim Unity

In *Kulzamswarup* he attacked the superstitions and the fanaticism of both the Hindus and Muslims and tried to remove their contradictions. He attempted to reconcile their controversies and pointed out repeatedly that both the Vedas and the *Qurān* laid stress on the allegiance to the one Supreme God. In these verses[20] he observes that "the *Qurān* and the Vedas emphasise the same. Both Hindus and the Muslims are the disciples of the same Lord. It is the difference in languages, names and customs that created illusions. I will undo their disillusionment by elucidating various names and signs of the existence of the common God to all of them."

Jo kuch kahyā katebane, soyi kahyā Ved.
Dou bande ek sāhab ke, par laḍat binā pāye bhed.
Boli sabo judā pari, nām jude dhare saban.
Calan judā kar diyā, tāthe samajh nā parī kin.
Tāthen huyi baḍī urjhan, so śurjhāun doy.
Nām nisān jāher karun, jyon samjhen sab koy.

In the following lines[21] he stressed the unity of God and said that "there is only the difference of name and rituals, in fact Khudā and Brahma are the same."

Nām sāro judā dhare, layi sabon judī rasam
Sab me umat āur duniyā, soyi khudā soyi brahm.

Several verses can be quoted which teach Hindus and Muslims to create amiable feelings amongst themselves and tolerate each other. In the following verse[22] he underlines the conceit that unfortunately colours the false ego of brahmins and Muslims who blow their own trumpets. The brahmins say that they are the holiest but to the poet they are no better than a handful of dust differently worded by them as '*rākh*' or '*khāq*' according to their religions.

Brāhmaṇ kahen ham uttam, musalmān kahe ham pāk.
Dau muṭhī ek ṭhour kī, ek rākh dūjī khāq.

In the same vein in the following verse[23] in order to make Hindus and Muslims a homogeneous community he dispels the clouds of illusion which have obscured the reality and thereby let them understand the true essence of their religions.

Karnā sārā ek ras, Hindu musalmān.
Dhokhā sabkā bhān ke, sabkā kahuṅgī jñān.

In fact he emphasized the equality of mankind and propagated religious toleration. He was not against any religion. But he did not tolerate the religious persecution and considered its opposition the primary duty of all. For this reason he did not oppose Islam as a religion but he did not lag behind in encouraging and organising Hindus against the religious persecution of Aurangzeb. He inspired the Hindu kings of his times against this policy in these verses[24] that 'O the Rājās, the Rāṇās and Rāots, the religion is in danger. Run to its rescue. You warriors, rise from the accursed sleep and be on your feet. The sword of the Kṣatriyas seems to be broken. Religion of the Hindus is endangered. You followers of the true religion, do not abandon it. The Turks are gaining the upper hand. In the three *lokas* (worlds) the land of *Bhārata* is most glorious and in it Hinduism is the best of all religious. The crowned heads of the land are down with shame. The *asuras* (demons) have imposed *jaziya* on the Hindus. They are not even getting food and water. The poor who are unable to pay *jaziya* are forcibly being made Muslims. Lo! The Bundela Chhatrasal has heard the appeal. He has come forward with the sword in hand and has taken this service upon his head. The God has marked him to be the general and the leader."

Rājā nai malo re rāṇan rāy taron, dharm jātā re koi dauḍo.
Jāgo ne jodhāre uṭh khaḍe raho, nid nigodi re choḍo.

Chutat hai re khaḍag ksatriyo re, dheram jāt hinduān.
Sat no choḍo re satvādiyo, jor badhyo turkān.
Tralokī me uttam khaḍ bhārat ko, tāme uttam hindu dharm.
Yāki chatrapatiyo ke sir, āye rahi it saram.
Asure lagāyā re hinduyo par jejiyā, bāko mile nahiṅ khān pān.
Jo garib na de sake jejiya, tāye mār kare musalmān.
Bāt ne sunī re bunṅdele Chatrasāl ne āge āy khaḍa le talwār.
Lai sevā re sarī sir kheinch ke sāniye kiyā senyāpati sirdār.

Sundersath

Prāṇnāth stood for a casteless and classless society. His precepts were not at variance with what he practised. The congregation of his followers i.e. 'Sundersath' represented various religions and regions of India.

Now we come to that trait of Sant Prāṇnāth which is unique and had no parallel in medieval times. To him his followers or 'Sundersath' as he called them were his priceless possessions most endearing to him. He writes[25] that "one of his eyes is on God and the other on his 'Sundersath'. But for his 'Sundersath' he has no worry."

Meri ek dṛṣti dhaniyame, duji sāth ke māhen.
To dukh āue mohe sāth ko, nā to dukh mohe kahuṅ nāhe.

The following verse[26] in the *Sindhivani* composed in the same vein is expressive of singular and exquisite sensibility. He says that "You (God) have suggested me that you will talk to me and give a glimpse when I am all alone."

Yo muke i bujhāiyo, je tun hekli piye
Yā to se kariyan galḍi, didārapaṇ ḍiye.

Sant Prāṇnāth interrogates in the next verse:[27] "How can I be all alone when you have tied other souls with me? Is there anybody besides you who can look after them? Therefore I cannot be all alone (*thi nasagan heklī*)!" This concern about his 'Sundersath' is somewhat unique and untouched in the medieval times by medieval saints. In the medieval times the emphasis was more on the personal rather than the collective salvation. This was a major flaw in those times. In the modern times the emphasis is more on the collective salvation or *saṅghamukti* or *sathmukti*. This is the ideal of the modern times. From this point of view Sant Prāṇnāth appears to be far ahead of other medieval saints and breathes modern consciousness.

Conclusion

As we have already seen that Prāṇnāth being the prime minister of the Jamnagar state, left it for propagating the Praṇāmī message throughout India in line with his guru, Devchand. He also visited the Arab countries twice for a considerable length of time and understood the finer aspects of the Islamic theology. He was also acquainted with the Christian scriptures through the British and Portuguese traders in Kathiawad. All these factors led to his broad viewpoint and enlightened outlook. He was convinced that the fundamentals of all religions were the same. If the barrier of languages was removed, it was the same religion. He revered equally all the religious scriptures. It is a noteworthy fact that some 300 years ago during the reign of Maharaja Chhatrasal the followers of this sect used to read jointly the Purāṇa and the *Qurān*. An Englishman who visited the temple of Prāṇnāth at Panna in 1764 had recorded[28] "I saw in it a small bed with a turban on it, called Śrī Prāṇnāth's seat. On each side of it was a stool. On one of these was a copy of *Qurān* and on the other a copy of the *Purāṇas*, with the learned men of both religions in attendance, ready to give profitable answers to all enquiries. Most of the replies made to them involved Unity of God."

Although this sect is not widespread throughout India and the number of its followers is not fairly large either, yet its importance cannot be underrated under existing conditions in India. Prāṇnāth was a forerunner of Gandhiji in the present century who dedicated his life in the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity. Gandhiji also failed like Prāṇnāth but both of them left a deep impression in their respective times and their importance and relevance cannot be belittled despite their failures.

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[22] Ibid., Sanandh, canto 40, couplet 42.

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[24] Ibid., Kirantan, canto 58, couplets 1, 2, 4, 16 and 20.

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[26] Ibid., Sindhvani, canto 1, couplet 42.

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12

Praṇāmī Sampradāya of Bundelkhand

BHAGWAN DAS GUPTA

Praṇāmi sect or *sampradāya* of Bundelkhand had its origin in Saurashtra (Kathiawar). Its founder Devchand was born on the 11 October 1581. His father Mattu Mehta, a merchant by profession and the mother Kunwarbai both were of a pious disposition. Devchand inherited their traits which later blossomed into an inquisitive mind and a spiritual restlessness. Whenever Devchand accompanied his father on business trips to Kutch and Kathiawar, he tried to mix with the learned people of different religions and obtain answers to his spiritual queries. He studied the holy scriptures of the Hindus and became conversant with the main tenets the Islam as well. But his young mind was thirsting for more and more. Therefore he left home at the age of sixteen and moved to Bhujpur in Kutch where impressed by the learned discourses of one Haridas Gosain on the *Bhāgvata Purāṇa* he became his disciple and joined the Radhavallabh sect which was then widely popular in Kutch and Saurashtra.[1] Here Devchand's parents joined him and somehow managed to marry him with the fond hope to lure him away from the spiritual pursuits, but in vain. In the meantime Haridas Gosain died and Devchand now settled at Jamnagar. Here he came in contact with another priest of the Radhavallabh sect, Kanjahi, whose discourses and learned expositions charmed Devchand to such an extent that he attended them regularly for fourteen years.[2]

Devchand's devotion to Kṛṣṇa deepened with the passage of time while his serious study of the *Bhagvata Purāṇa* over a long period gave new dimensions to his spiritual thoughts. A divine grace settled on him and he attained enlightenment at the mature age of forty.[3] Devchand now started preaching himself. Themes of the *Bhagvata Purāṇa* and the loving pranks of youthful Kṛṣṇa still formed the kernel of his discourses, yet a new liberalism and tolerance of religions other than the Radhavallabh sect became a dominant note. Unity of God and brotherhood of man received due emphasis. This facilitated a transformation in the character of the Radhavallabh sect under the able guidance of Mihraj, the spiritual successor of Devchand.

After the death of Devchand (5 September, 1655) Mihraj wielded the supreme influence upon his followers. Born on 6 September 1618, Mihraj was a scion of a well known Kṣatriya family of Jamnagar. His father Keshav Thakur was a minister of the ruler of Jamnagar and the mother Dhanbai was a pious lady of great repute. Mihraj met Devchand at the impressionable age of twelve with his brother Govardhan. He soon fell under the saintly spell of Devchand, who too developed a great affection towards his young disciple. Mihraj studied the Vedic texts and the Purāṇas under the guidance of Devchand. He grew mature in age and experience and after the death of his father Keshav Thakur, himself became a minister of Jamnagar for some time. He had also married by then. His wife Baiji lovingly called him Prāṇnāth, an address which was later adopted by his followers and Mihraj became popular as Svāmī Prānnāth.[4]

Mihraj did not remain long in the service of the ruler of Jamnagar. His devotion to Devchand grew in proportion to his maturity. At the behest of his teacher, Mihraj travelled widely in the neighbouring regions and undertook voyages to the ports of the Persian Gulf and Arabia. He is said to have stayed in Arabia for about four years in order to round up the business of one Khetaji, who was the brother of a disciple of Devchand. Gujarat, Saurashtra, Kutch and Sind were then under the Mughal rule. Prāṇnāth's stint as a minister of Jamnagar and his travels to the Persian ports—Muscat and Bandar Abbas—and Arabia made him fairly conversant with the Persian and the Arabic, which helped him in the study of the Mohammedan scriptures. Thus he acquired first hand knowledge of Islamic theology and culture. It stood him in good stead in his dealings with the Muslim ulemas and besides widening the horizon of his thought, developed in him a secular outlook.[5]

After the death of Devchand (5 September, 1655), Prāṇnāth took up the mission of his teacher which was that of universal love and peace with all. He added his own bit to it and sought to reconcile the differences of race and religion by stressing the commonhood of God. His missionary zeal prompted him to undertake journeys to distant lands. He not only travelled intensively within Gujarat, but also visited the Portuguese settlement of Diu, Thatta (Sindh), and ports of Muscat and Bandar Abbas (Persian Gulf).[6]

These were the times of great stress and strain. Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb had unleashed a war of religious persecution and his short-sighted anti-Hindu policies provoked the widespread popular resistance. The Sikhs in the Punjab, Satnami Jats in the region between Delhi and Agra, Rajputs in Rajputana, the Bundelas in Bundelkhand and the Marathas in the Deccan had risen in arms under the respective leadership of Guru Govind Singh, Gokla Jat, Durgadas Rathore, Chhatrasal and the great Shivaji. Even the saintly souls like Samarth Guru Ramdas, Guru Govind Singh and Swami Prāṇnāth could not keep themselves away from the wave that was sweeping over the country and were drawn into the vortex.

Before settling down finally at Panna in Bundelkhand, Swami Prāṇnāth visited Delhi with a band of his followers in order to seek a meeting with the Emperor Aurangzeb and persuade him to give up his policy of religious persecution. But his efforts to obtain an interview with the Emperor did not materialise. He was even imprisoned by Faulad Khan, the Kotwal of Delhi.[7] His followers somehow managed to secure his release. Swami Prāṇnāth was now convinced of the futility of his attempt to bring the Emperor to reason. He then proceeded to Udaipur in Rajputana where the Rāṇā asked him to quit his capital. Thereupon moving through Malwa, he entered Bundelkhand in 1683 where he was received with great hospitality and devotion by Chhatrasal of Panna. At that time Chhatrasal was waging a relentless war against the Mughal occupation of his land. Swami Prāṇnāth aided and inspired Chhatrasal in his struggle. But this should not be construed as his antagonism to Islam or the Mohammedans in general. He was only against the policy of religious persecution launched by the Mughal imperialists under the bigot Emperor and not against the Islam or its followers as is amply borne out by his secular outlook, discourses and pithy sayings.[8]

Swami Prāṇnāth had made a comparative study of the then prevalent popular religions and sects of the country as is only too obvious from the scriptures of the Praṇāmī sect.[9] He was an erudite scholar and a linguist knowing the Gujarati, Sindi, Hindi, Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic. He had also a fair knowledge of the teachings of Nanak and Kabir. Besides being well versed in the Vedic and Purāṇic lore, he was not the less conversant with the *Qurān* and the

Shariat. His vast learning and erudition made Swami Prāṇnāth, what he was, a tolerant religious teacher and a social reformer with visions of universal toleration and brotherhood.

Praṇāmī sect or *sampradāya*, as has been noted above was initially an offshoot of the Radhavallabh Sampradāya which under the guidance of its second teacher Swami Prāṇnāth acquired the profile of the cults of Nanak and Kabir. It got its appellation Praṇāmī from *praṇāma*, a common mode of greeting among its followers. It is also known as the Prāṇnāthī and the Nijanand Sampradāya.

Swamī Prāṇnāth, like Nanak and Kabir, was a great protagonist of the basic unity of all religions and decried the intolerance of the Hindus and the Muslims alike. This was the need of the hour. The society was then torn by the differences between the Hindus and the Muslims. Religious and social persecution was the order of the day and its embers were fanned by a non-secular autocratic imperialist rule at the top. This caused great concern to Swami Prāṇnāth and changed the tenor of his teachings. He deemed Hindu and Muslim communalism to be the bane of Indian society, as it is even now and tried to inculcate a spirit of tolerance and amity between them. This he sought to accomplish by emphasising the unity of God and underlining the inherent similarity of all religions which to him were the paths leading to the same goal. According to him the Vedas and the *Qurān* reveal the existence of the same Lord. Once while clearing the doubts of his favourite disciple Laldas on this point, he remarked:

jo kateb so veda batāi / ya mein antar nāhin bhāi /
yek dhanī sāhib sab kairī / dujī māni citta jin fairī /
hindu turak dīn dai gāye / tin mil kai dai panth calāye /
señcā ṣañch jagat me hoi / ek arth mil kahat na koi /
ab maiṅ veda kateb milauṅ / tinke arth ek tahrauṅ /
meti virodh jagat jas leuṅ / ek rāha pargat kar deuṅ /

(*Mehraj Charitra*, pp. 172-73)

("Whatever is in the *Qurān*, so is taught by the Vedas. There is no difference between the two. One Supreme God is the Lord of all. Do not be confused by believing them to be two (different). Hindus and Turks adhere to two religions and they founded two sects. There is a sort of tug of war in the world. No one emphasises the unity. By a comparative study of the Vedas and the *Qurān*, I would establish their inherent unity. Thus I seek to remove antagonism and point out the common path.")

He repeats his above assertions again and again, though a little differently at times, mainly to push the point deep into the consciousness of his followers. His following verses would suffice by way of examples:

jo kuch kahā kateb ne / so hi kehyā ved //
dou bade ek sāheb ke / par laḍat binā pāye bhed //
bolī sabī judā parī / nām jude dhare saban /
calan judī kar diyā / tāyeṅ samajh na parī kin //
tātheṅ hui baḍi urjhan / so murjhan doe /
nām niśān jāher karuṅ / jyoṅ samjhe sab koe //

(*Kulzam Khulasa Prakaran*, 11-12)

("What is said in the *Qurān*, the same has been asserted in the Vedas. Both (Hindus and Muslims) are the slaves of the same Master. But the differences of language, names and customs have created knotty problems. I will undo them by explaining the name and the attributes (of God) in a way that all may understand (the Truth.")

And then he concludes:

nām sāroṅ judā dhare / lai saboṅ judī rasam /
sab main umat aur duniyāṅ / soi khudā soi brahm /

(Ibid., 12)

("They all gave a different name and adopted varied rituals. All consist of the 'Soul' and the 'Universe'. Khudā and Brahmā is the same.")

Prāṇnāth's noble mission is,

karānā sārā ek ras, hindu musalmān /
dhokhā sabkā bhān ke, sabkā kahuṅgī jñān //

(*Kulzam Sanandh Prakaran*, 31)

("I would unify all the Hindus and Muslims. I understand their deceptions and would impart them Right Knowledge.")

Swami Prānnāth, like Kabir and Nanak condemned the religious and social prejudices of the Hindus and Muslims without sparing the either. About pretentious Muslims he says:

> *kahalābe mahammad ke, cale nā mahammad sāth |*
> *ḍār juṅdāgī dīn meiṅ, kahe ham sunat jamāt ||*
> (*Kulzam Khulasa Prakaran*, 11)

("They call themselves the followers of Muhammad, but follow Him not. They cause disunity in the Faith and declare that the majority listens to them.")

Then again,

> *kufra ne kādeṅ āpno, aur dekheṅ sab kufrān |*
> *apnā āṅgan na dekhiṅ, kaheṅ ham musalmān ||*
> (*Kulzam Khulasa Prakaran*, 40)

("They do not get rid of their *kufra* (infidelity), instead brand all others infidels. They do not look within themselves and yet assert, they are Musalman.")

Swami Prāṇnāth condemned in unmistakable terms the bigotry and intolerance of the Muslims towards the Hindus during the reign of Aurangzeb. The following lines amply reveal the plight of the Hindus under his rule:

> *kareṅ julam garīb par, kohu nā kāhu fariyād |*
> *kar sunat gost khilawahiṅ, kaheṅ hameṅ hot savāb |*
> *O rājī ek mesh meiṅ, tāe mār chuḍabe ḍāb*
> *O robe sir pīṭ hoṅ, e kaheṅ hameṅ hot savāb*
> *khānā khilābeṅ āp meiṅ, dekhlābe masīt mehrāb*
> *lekar kalmā paḍāwahiṅ, kaheṅ hāmeṅ hot savāb*
> (*Kulzam Sanandh Prakaran*, 40)

("They tyrannize over the poor. No one attends to their supplications. The circumcision is affected and the flesh is fed. They (Hindus) like an attire but forced to give it up. They weep and beat their heads (in anguish). They are made to eat with them (Muslims) and forcibly taken to the mosque and taught the *kalmā*. This all they (Muslims) deem to be acts of piety.")

Swami Prāṇnāth dismisses such flimsy pretexts to perpetrate excesses over the Hindus and denouncing the fanatic Muslims, tells them blandly,

jo dukh debe kinko, so nāhī musalmān
nabī eṅ musalmān kā, nām dharyā meherbān

(*Kulzam Sanandh Prakaran*, 40)

("He who persecutes others is not a Mussalman. The Prophet named Mussalman, the one who bestows kindness.")

The high caste Hindus are also not spared for their inhuman treatment of the lower castes. Swami Prāṇnāth firmly believed in the social equality of all human beings. To him dress or demeanour with religious and class symbols were meaningless without the purity of heart and thought. He poses a question to the Hindus:

caṅḍāl herdeṅ nirmal, saṅg khele bhagvān |
dekhābe nahiṅ kāhuṅ ko, gop rākhe nām ||
vipra bhesh bāher dṛṣṭi, khaṭ karam pāle ved |
syām khin supne nahiṅ, jāne nahin brahm bhed |
udar kudum kārne, uṭtamai dekhāben aṅg
vyākaran bād vivād ke, arth kareṅ kai raṅg
ab kaho kāke chue, aṅg lāge chot |
adham tam vipra aṅge, caṅdāl aṅg udyot ||

(*Kulzam Sanandh Prakaran*, 16)

("There is a Chandal (the untouchable) with a pure heart devoted to God who does not display his devotion, but keeps it a secret. And there is a brahmin dressed as such, but with an eye on the worldly things, who cites the Vedas to suit his evil designs. He does not ever dream of Śyāma (Kṛṣṇa) and knows nothing of *Brahma Bhed* (knowledge of the Brahmā). Further, he exhibits outward cleanliness in order to earn the livelihood for his family and gives varied interpretations of grammatical controversies to support his selfish ends. Now, bespeak: By touching who one becomes unclean, by touching the most wicked brahmin or the Chandal with an enlightened soul?")

Such examples of Prāṇnāth's unequivocal condemnation of the intolerance of the high caste Hindus are scattered all over the chapters of the *Kulzam* (the scripture of Praṇāmī sect, also known as the *Tar Tamya Sagar*) and the *Vitaks* composed by his disciples.

To sum up, Swami Prāṇnāth was equally critical of the intolerance, prejudices and superstitions of the both Hindus and Muslims. He always tried to impress upon both of them the golden rule of

Sulah-Kul (universal toleration), enunciated by Akbar about a century earlier and followed the trial blazed forth by his illustrious predecessors in this regard, Nanak and Kabir.

Prāṇnāth asserted repeatedly,

jāt ek khusam kī, āur na koi jāt |
ek khusam ek duniyā, āur uḍ gai dujī vāṭ ||

(*Kulzam Sanandh Prakaran*, 40)

("There is no other caste or tribe except that of the Lord. There is only a Lord and His universe, others pale into insignificance.")

Swami Prāṇnāth was the man of the masses. His mission was to propagate and popularise the tenets of his faith among the people of different regions. Therefore he adopted the regional languages. This accounts for the multi-language verses of the *Kulzam* which are variedly composed in the Gujarati, Sindhi and Hindi with a fair sprinkling of the Persian and the Punjabi. However it must be said to the credit of Swami Prāṇnāth that even in those distant times, he had the prophetic vision of Hindi being the language of the vast masses of India with all the attributes of the national language. He stressed this point in the following manner:

boli judī saban kī, āur sabkā judā calan |
sab urjhe nām jude dhar, par mere to kahena saban ||
binā hisābeṇ boliyāṅ, mileṅ sakal jahān |
sabko sugam jānke, kahuṅgī hindustān ||
baḍī bhāṣā ehī bhalī, so sab meṅ jāher |
karke pāk saban ko, aṅtar māṅhi bāher ||

(*Kulzam Sanandh Prakaran*, 40)

("All have different languages and customs. They all are engaged in controversies by different names. But I have to address them all. There are languages in whole of the world, without number. But since the language of Hindustan (Hindi) is the most easy, I will speak in it. This is really the most major language known to all and I have to purify them all, inside and out.")

Swami Prāṇnāth thus sought to prepare the way for the emotional national integration of the country by striking at the roots of Hindu-Muslim communalism, social inequalities and the controversies of race, religion and language. His suggestions and solutions still hold good and may well help in resolving the differences which plague the Indian nation.

Swami Prāṇnāth died on Friday, the 29 June 1694 at Panna (Madhya Pradesh) where his last remains lay enshrined in a beautiful temple which also houses the valuable manuscripts of the Praṇāmī Sampradāya. The *Kulzam*, crown and the flute of Kṛṣṇa receive regular offerings and the followers of the Praṇāmī sect from Gujarat, Sind, north India and Nepal flock to Panna on the eve of Śarad Pūrṇimā (autumn full moon after the *pūjā*) to participate in the week long festival.

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[1] Radhavallabh Sect was an offshoot of the Vaiṣṇavism. Its followers worshipped the child Kṛṣṇa of Braj and *Sri Bhāgavata Purāṇa* was their scripture. The deeds of Bāla Kṛṣṇa, his loving pranks, *rāsa līlās* and the spiritual love with Rādhā and the Braj maidens formed the main theme of their recitations and discourses. Kṛṣṇa was taken to be the beloved (*priyatama*) and the followers were deemed to be the *sakhīs* or his maiden playmates who were as devoted and faithful to him as a wife to her husband. The philosophic idea being that Kṛṣṇa was the Greater Soul (*paramātmā*) from whom the lesser souls have emanated, and it should be the ultimate goal of the latter which are immersed in the *māyā* (illusion) to seek union with their Creator and thus attain *mokṣa* (salvation). This could be accomplished through the guidance of a teacher and by the study of scriptures, their recitations, *kīrtans*, religious discourses and a keen desire akin to obsession to come to face with face the Greater Soul.

[2] *Mehraj Charitra* (*MC*), pp. 4, 8, 15; *Britant Muktāvalī* (*BM*), pp. 4, 5, 35-75, 79-81, 108.

[3] *MC*, p. 21; *BM*, pp. 116, 126.

[4] *MC*, pp. 24, 32; *BM*, pp. 112, 138, 127, 147, 150.

[5] *Lal Das Bitak*, pp. 109-15, 165-73, 189-211.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid., pp. 310-16, 320-65, 390-433. Faulad Khan or Sidi Paulad was the Kotwal of Delhi, *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, Eng. trans., J.N. Sarkar, pp. 110-11.

[8] *Lal Das Bitak*, pp. 570-82, 610; *Life and Times of Maharaja Chhatrasal Bundela*, pp. 96-98.

[9] The Praṇāmī scriptures mainly include the *Kulzam*, *Lal Das Bitak*, *Britant Muktavali*, and *Mehraj Charitra*. The *Kulzam* is the collection of Swami Prāṇnāth's teachings and discourses in verse. Its chapters are variedly written in Gujarati, Sindi and Hindi. *Lal Das Bitak* was written by Lal Das the most favourite disciple of Prāṇnāth, while *Britant Muktavali* was composed by Brijbhushan, a disciple of Chhatrasal Bundela of Panna. The author of *Mehraj Charitra* was Hansraj, a Bakhshi of Hirdeshah who succeeded to the throne of Panna after the death of his father Chhatrasal. All of these scriptures have now been published by the Prāṇnāth Mission, New Delhi.

13

Influence of Islam and Sufism on Prāṇnāth's Religious Movement

HAFIZ MD. TAHIR ALI

Sufism has influenced most of the religious movements of India from the thirteenth century onwards. Indian people being mostly religious-minded and inclined towards mysticism, warmly welcomed the mystical teachings of Muslim Sufis. On the other hand, egalitarian and humanistic attitude of the Sufis attracted the masses who were groaning under the pressure of casteism and untouchability in their own society. The door of Sufi *khanqahs* were open to all and sundry without any distinction of caste and creed. As a result, popularity of Sufism grew in leaps and bounds and played a vital role in changing the Indian society and culture. "From the thirteenth century" remarks Prof. Gibb "Sufism increasingly attracted the creative social and intellectual energies within the community, to become the bearer or instrument of a social and cultural revolution."[1] Monotheism and devotional adoration, although not altogether unknown to the religious leaders of India, got much impetus by similar Sufi doctrines. Most of the founders of religious sects made the best use of their knowledge of Sufism and used the Sufi terminologies to preach their views; thus Sufism helped in stimulating the Indian religious movements. Influence of Sufism is quite evident in the teachings of Kabir, Dādu, Guru Nanak and others.

Although there is no evidence that Caitanya had studied Islam yet it has been admitted that he had contacts with Muslims,[2] thereby it may be assumed, although not with all certainty, that he might have imbibed some of the Islamic and Sufi doctrines particularly pertaining to devotion and love of God. But as far as Kabir is concerned there is no such uncertainty. He was brought up in a Muslim family and was acquainted with Islamic and Sufi teachings due to family tradition as well as his personal contacts with contemporary *shaikhs* and *pīrs*. It is said that he was a disciple of

Shaikh Taqi[3] who belonged to Suharwardiya order.[4] The author of the book *Kabir* is not ready to accept him as a disciple of Shaikh Taqi yet he writes:

> As the Sufi preachings had already spread all over Northern India in Kabir's time, and as Sufi mysticism had impregnated the religious sensibility of the elite as well as the whole composite culture of the time, Kabir's own religious ideals and representations could not but be somewhat influenced by Sufi thought and imagery, as is suggested by many of his sayings.[5]

Guru Nanak was also acquainted with Islamic teachings and Sufi doctrines. A.A. Rizvi thinks that as he belonged to a literate family, neatly placed in the service of the Afghan governors of the Punjab, he must have listened to verses of Rumi, Sa'di, Hafiz and Jami in his own environment and the thought of the great mystic poets would have aroused his interest in divine love, grace and mercy.[6] Guru Nanak had travelled extensively and visited many important holy places. Moreover he had met and conversed with many Sufis of his time particularly Shaikh Sharaf of Panipat and Shaikh Ibrahim, the spiritual successor of Baba Farid al-Din Ganj-i-Shakar. Therefore his teachings are very close to the mystical doctrines preached by Muslim Sufis. Dr. Tara Chand writes: "How deep Guru Nanak's debt is to Islam, it is hardly necessary to state, for it is so evident in his words and thoughts. Manifestly he was steeped in Sufi lore and the fact of the matter is, that it is much harder to find how much exactly he drew from the Hindu Scriptures.[7]

Four hymns and 130 *ślokas*[8] of Shaikh Farid have been included in the *Ādī Granth* compiled by Guru Arjun in AD 1604. There is a dispute concerning the authorship of these *ślokas*. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami is of the opinion that Shaikh Ibrahim is probably the real author.[9] However, this is beyond dispute that these *ślokas* are the compositions of a Sufi and reflect the impact of Sufism on Sikh religion.

Similarly Dādu Panthi sect is also influenced by Sufism. Dādu Dayal, a disciple of Kamal[10] had frequent contact with the Sufis. His knowledge of Islam and Sufism is evident from his verses which he composed in Hindi, Gujarati, Marwari and Persian. According to Aziz Ahmad he "was especially impressed by the Suharwardiya emphasis on the light of God (*nūr*) which appears again and again as a theme of devotional ecstasy in his poetry."[11]

Many scholars have stressed the Islamic and Sufi influence on different religious movements of India but that on Prāṇnāth's preachings has not yet been fully assessed. In this paper an attempt has been made to show the influence of Islam and Sufism on Prāṇnāth's religious teachings.

Prāṇnāth (1618-94), whose original name is Mihir Raj or Mihraj Thakur, belonged to Gujarat. He was born at Jamnagar in a Kṣatriya family. His father was the prime minister of Jamnagar. Prāṇnāth became the disciple of Sri Devchand and later on, by the permission of his guru, he went to Arabia where he stayed for five years. On coming back he served two *rajas* successfully as their prime minister. The Raja of Jamnagar, due to some misunderstanding, put him into prison where he started to compose verses which contained his religious views. He started his religious movement from Surat and travelled far and wide of the country to make it a success. His verses in Gujarati, Sindhi and Khaḍi Boli have been collected in the book *Qulzam Swarup*.[12] It is a collection of seventeen treatises containing 1875 quatrains (*chaupāis*). His *nom-de-plum*, in most of the verses, is Mahamat or Mahāmati. Islamic and Sufi terminologies have been extensively used by Mahāmati Prāṇnāth, and particularly in the treatises *Khulasa*, *Khilwat*, *Marrar Sagar*, *Chhota Qayamat Nama* and *Bada Qayamat Nama* esoteric and mystical connotations of Islamic and Sufi doctrines have been explained. His followers are called "Praṇāmi". They are also called "Dhanis" or "Prāṇnāthis".[13]

Mahāmati Prāṇnāth has opposed caste distinction and tried to abolish idol-worship. He is a monotheist and firmly believes in one God who is the Lord of the universe. He also believes that Muhammad is the true Prophet and none excelles him in greatness.

āpne dṛṣtise sal kaheṅ, khudā ek mahammat barhak |
aur nā koyi āge piche binā mahammad buzrak ||
("*Qūranic* verses and *Hadith* all declare that God is one and Muhammad is true:
And neither before nor after, anyone is greater than Muhammad.")[14]

He describes three phases of Prophet Muhammad (1) *bashari* (human), (2) *malaki* (angelic) and (3) *haqqi* (divine).[15] Bimla Mehta writes that Muhammad is the command of God and that power of Light (*nūr* which comes in the world time and again to guide the human being and to convey the message of God.[16] But in many of the quatrains we find that Prāṇnāth has clearly described Muhammad as the last Prophet and the recipient of the last Divine scripture. Even then if Bimla Mehta's explanation be the correct interpretation of Prāṇnāth's view of Muhammad then it means that he speaks of the reality of Muhammad (*ḥakiqat-e-muḥammadi*) which according to the Sufis is the first epiphany of God, and is known as *Wahdat*.

According to the Sufis divine essence is unknowable. The essence manifests itself in different forms. These manifestations are known as descents (*tanazzulāt*). There are six descents (*tanazzulāt-e-sitta*) namely *ahadiyat* which is the manifestation of the Absolute One in the state of Unity. The second is *wahdat* where the essence becomes conscious of itself and knows all its potential attributes and determinations in a general way. This is also called reality of Muhammad by which all things emanate, and here miracles are bestowed upon the prophets and saints. This saying attributed to Prophet Muhammad (*awwalumā khaluqa al-allahu narī wa kullu-al-khalāiqui min nuri wa anā min nur-al-allah*) refers to it. Here it is necessary to note that the personality of Muhammad is different from the reality of Muhammad. Probably Mahāmati Prāṇnāth refers to it. The third is *wahidiat* where God becomes conscious of His attributes and determinate forms in detail. One must keep in mind that this becoming is not an event in the life of the essence for the essence does not suffer any change.

These three are known as Divine ranks (*maratibi ilahi*), and the remaining three (*i*) "Alam-i-Arwah (World of spirits), (*ii*) Alam-i-Mithal (World of similitude) and (*iii*) "Alami-i-Ajsam (World of body) are known as worldly ranks (*maratibi kuni*). Some of the Sufis call the first three as (*i*) Lahut, (*ii*) Jabarut, and Malakut[17] while others are of the opinion that all the three Divine ranks are Lahut and the worldly ranks are Jabarut, Malakut and Nasut respectively.[18]

Mahāmati Prāṇnāth has used purely Sufi terms "Lahut", "Jabarut", "Malakut" and "Nasut" at many places and has explained them in his own way.[19]

Unity of religions is the central idea of his preaching. According to him the teachings of Katab, i.e. *Qurān*, *Bible*, *Torah* and *Psalm*—are the same as those of Vedas. He preaches that all the religions, in spite of external differences, lead to the same goal. The external differences are only due to the difference of language, society, region and clime. Every prophet had to convey the Divine message in the language of his country and particularly in accordance with he social condition and the level of understanding of his people. Disputes among the followers of different religions are only due to the ignorance of the real import of holy Scriptures. See the following quatrains:

dohe kahen vajud ek hai, arbah sabon mein ek |
ved kateb ek batāvahon, par pavai ne koi vivek ||
("Both (Hindus and Muslims) accept that the existence is same, and there is one soul in everybody;
Vedas and Kateb teach the same thing but nobody understands the real meaning.")[20]

yo kuch kahayā kateb ne, so'hi kahayā ved |
ved ek saheb ke, par laḍas binā pāye vivek ||
("Whatever has been said in Vedas the same are in Kateb:
All are the slaves of one Lord, but quarrel without knowing the secret.")[21]

boli sabon judī parī, nām judī dhare savan |
calan judā kar liyā, tāyen samajh na parī kin ||
("People have different languages, and call God with different names;
Their ways (of adoration) are also different, so they don't understand (the reality).")[22]

sab jāte nām jude dhare, aur sab kā sāmbad ek |
sab ko bandagī vāhī ki, piche laḍe bin pāye vivek ||
("Different people call him with different names, but Husband (Lord) of all is the same;
All adore only Him but quarrel without knowing the truth.")[23]

The *Qurān* explicitly mentions the names of three Divine Scriptures (*Bible* of Jesus Christ), (*Torah* of Moses) and (*Psalm* of David), but not that of Vedas, although *Qurān* demands that a Muslim must believe in all the Divine Scriptures revealed to different prophets. Therefore a Muslim can neither accept nor reject the Vedas categorically as Divine Scripture. However, it is an article of faith for a Muslim to believe that all the Divine Scriptures convey the same message, and likewise, all the religions preached by different prophets lead to the same goal. Shah Wali Allah of Delhi writes: "All the religions despite different forms and shapes, agree upon the basic articles of faith and the fundamental of virtue. For example, every religion that has come down from God, prescribes purity, prayer, alms giving and pilgrimage. It is, however, a different matter, if the methods of the observations of these duties be dissimilar. To seek nearness to God, through prayers and worship, is the teaching of every religion. The remembrance of God in the morning and in the evening for which the word "Dhikr" has come, reading of the Divine scriptures and reckoning it as a means of goodly reward, are enshrined in every religion. Similarly in all the Shariats, marriage is made lawful and adultry is forbidden. It is the teaching of all the prophets that whatever government be in existence, it should follow the path of justice and equity, and safeguard the interest of the weak and give a proper punishment to the criminal and the wrong-doer. These are the fundamental principles of religion common among all the systems of faith."[24]

Sufis believe that with whatever name you call God, He will respond it, Sanai says:

banām āuki auw nami nadārad,
bahar nāmi ki khawani sarbarārad.
("In the name of one who has no name,
With whatever name you call Him, He uplifts His head.")

Dara Shikoh begins the introduction of *Mejnla' Ul Bahrain* with the following couplet:

kufr wa islam dar rahash puyām,
waḥdahu lā sharika lahu goyān.
("Islam and Infidelity (Hinduism) both are galloping on the way towards God;
Both exclaim: He is one and none shares His Sovereignty.")[25]

Regarding the dispute concerning God the Holy *Qurān* says:

> *wamina al-nāsi man yu jādiluua fial-allahi*
> *bighairi ʻalmin-wa lā hudā wa la kitabin munir*
> ("Among mankinds is he who disputeth concerning Allah without knowledge or guidance or a Scripture giving light.")[26]

These Islamic and Sufi concepts of the Unity and Sovereignty of God, Unity of revelation and variety of Divine scriptures have permeated to a great extent into the teachings of Prāṇnāth as we have observed in the aforesaid quatrains.

Similarly Mahāmati Prāṇnāth's attempts to explain Qurānic verses mystically is the impact of similar Sufi endeavour. Sufis have written many commentaries upon *Qurān* from mystical point of view stressing on the esoteric meaning. They say that Qurānic verses have more than one meaning. Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanwai quotes a *Hadith*:

> *inna lilqurāni zāhirān wa baṭinā*
> ("Indeed for the *Qurān* there are external and internal (meanings.")[27]

Ibn ʻArabi quotes the saying of Haḍrat Ibn' ʻAbbas who says': If I comment upon the verse:

> *Allahu alladi khalaqa sabʻa samāwat wa min*
> *al-arḍ mithlahunna yatanafzalu al-amra bainahunna*
> ("You will stone me", and in another saying, "you will call me infidel.")[28]

Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi says:

> Know that the words of the *Qurān* have an exterior (sense) and under the exterior (sense) an interior (sense) exceedingly overpowering;
> And beneath the inward (sense), is a third interior (sense) wherein all intellect become lost.
> The fourth interior (sense) of the *Qurān*, none hath perceived at all, except God the peerless and incomparable.

> In the *Qurān* do not thou, O son, regard (only) the exterior, the Devil regards Adam as naught but clay.
> The exterior of the *Qurān* is like a man's person, for his features are visible, whereas his spirit is hidden.[29]

Prāṇnāth also has emphasised again and again that one should not take only the external meaning of the *Qurān*. He, like the Sufis, has given esoteric interpretation of many Qurānic words such as *Lailat al-Qadr*, *al-Fair*, *Qayamat* etc. Qurānic description of *Lailat al-Qadr* is thus:

> Lo I We revealed it on the Night of Power.
> Ah, what will convey unto thee what the Night of Power is.
> The Night of Power is better than a thousand months.
> The Angels and the Spirits descend therein, by the permission of their Lord, with all decrees.
> (The night is) Peace until the rising of the dawn.[30]

Sufis use the word *Lailat al-Qadr* in mystical sense. According to them it is a time when a *salik* (traveller of mystical path) reaches a stage, known as "*Ain al-Jania*; where he is endowed with a particular manifestation by which he becomes aware of his place and his relation as well as nearness with God.[31] Prāṇnāth interprets it, in his own way, as a night of manifestation of Divine play,[32] and as the night preceding to the dawn of *Qayāmat* (day of religious awakening, according to Prāṇnāth).

Qurān has repeated the word *Lailat al-Qadr* thrice in the aforesaid Surah. This repetition has special significance for Mahamati Prāṇnāth.[33] According to him *Lailat al-Qadr* was completed in three parts; first at the time of Prophet Hud, second at the time of Prophet Nuh, and third at the time of awakening (his own time). The first has also been related with the Childhood of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and the second with his *Rāsa Līlā* (amorous sport).[34]

Similarly he symbolises carnal self (*nafsi ammārah*) with Dajjal. Sufis always try to subdue and overpower the carnal self because it is a great obstacle in the path of God. It is the source of all evils and takes a man away from God by forcing him to indulge in prohibited pleasures. Prāṇnāth warns that Dajjal is very powerful and he overpowers every one. None can see him but he is present in every body and deceives in such a way that one cannot differentiate between right and wrong. People are waiting for his appearance in the world but they are not seeing in their own self. Dajjal first trapped the learned persons and then none could escape.[35]

There is nothing about Dajjal in the Holy *Qurān* but we find his description in Kitab al-Fitan of *Suhih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim.* It is said that Dajjal will appear at the time when the day of judgement will be very near. He will let the tyranny and evils prevail all over the world, then, at last, will perish at the hand of Christ or Imam Mehdi and the whole world will surrender to Islam. Some marks of Dajjal[36] are also found in Hadith.

Prāṇnāth claims to be Imam Mehdi or the last Imam.[37] He has described the mystical connotations of the marks of Dajjal narrated in Hadith.

Sufis have described four stages on the way to God: (1) Shariat, (2) Tariqat, (3) Haqiqat and (4) Marifat. Shariat is the religious law; Tariqat is spiritual path; Haqiqat is the stage of reality, and Marifat is the gnosis of God. Among these four, Shariat is the prerequisite for spiritual progress. None can enter into the domain of Tariqat without being perfect in the observance of Shariat. In observance of Shariat mere formalities are of no value in Sufism. A *faqih* (jurist) may be satisfied if rituals and prayers are performed, but a Sufi shall give no importance to mere performance of rituals until and unless they are adorned with sincerity, piety, devotion and love to God. Shaikh Abu Sa'id Kherraz says: "Reality of religion is the purity of heart from all the things and heart's comfort with God.[38] He, whose prayers are mere pretensions, is not a true Muslim. Prāṇnāth also speaks the same:

jo andar jhutī badaṅgī, dekhlāve bāhar |
tinko muslim jin kaho, vaha savābī dam jāher ||
("Whoever is not sincere in servitude and pretends to be so;
Who calls him a Muslim, he is in illusion.")[39]

dil pāk jolon hoye nahiṅ, kahā vajud upar se dhoye |
dhoye vajudā pāk dil, kabhuṅ huyā no koye ||
("If heart is not pure, it is useless to wash the body; By washing the body none gets purification of heart.")[40]

However, for getting perfection, sincerity is the must. After becoming perfect in Shariat a Salik traverses the stages of Tariqat, and by renouncing the world and transgressing the limit of lower self (*nafs*) and lust, he enters into the realm of Haqiqat[41] where he realizes the truth that God is the only Reality and nothing is existent except God. He beholds God everywhere and in everything. Prāṇnāth describes it thus:

> *khāna pīnā dabedār; rojā, nimāj dīṭār |*
> *ek dosto jāne hak kī, duno sab murdār ||*
> ("(His) eating, drinking, fasting and prayer all are vision of God:
> He has the friendship with God alone, and all others are dead for him.")[42]

At the stage of Marifat, which is the *summum bonum*, the secret of Divine Existence and Attributes are manifested. This stage is only for the chosen ones.

Prāṇnāth has described the stages of Shariat, Tariqat, Haqiqat and Marifat in many of his quatrains. In *Marfat Sagār* he explains them like the Sufis.

> *sariat, tarīkat hakīkat evem marifat |*
> *in chāron kī bine islām judi judi kahe jugat ||*
> ("Shariat, Tariqat, Haqiqat and Marifat;
> Islam is the foundation of these four which are known as different planes.")[43]

He further says:

> *sari bine islām ki pāk kere vejud |*
> *tarikat pohoñce malkut lon jāge hoye jhakā maksud ||*
> *bine islām hakīkat so khole bātun saha najar |*
> *pohoñce vafā nur makām khās giro firasto fajar ||*
> *islam bine hak marfat pohoñcāve tajalla nur ||*
> *e makān jāsik sahoṅ ka, giro sāmal khās hajur ||*
> ("Shariat is the foundation of Islam which purifies the body;
> And Tariqat takes a Salik to the stage of Malakut where no existence is needed.
> Haqiqat, the foundation of Islam, unveils the secret of soul; And takes (the Salik) to the abode of Light amidst the group of conscious angels.

Marifat, the foundation of Islam, takes (the Salik) to the manifestation of Divine Light;
This is the abode of loving soul where the groups of chosen of the chosens remain in Divine presence.")[44]

Mahamati Prāṇnāth has also mentioned the stations of Tariqat (*muqāmāti suluk*) such as gratitude, poverty, patience etc. and counted them as the means for Divine Love. He says:

mahāmat kahe imān isak kī sūkar garībī majar |
in bidh ruhen dosti dhani ki, pyār kar sake tyokar ||
"Mahamat says that the faith of love is gratitude, poverty and patience;
These are the ways through which the souls enjoy the company of the Lord, so love God as such if you can.")[45]

He has also given much stress on Divine Love which occupies an central place in Sufism, and the Sufi literature, particularly poetry, is replete with this theme. Moreover, the Sufis warn that ego or "I"ness is a veil between the lover and the beloved. Union with God is impossible until and unless one annihilates his ego and gets rid of "I"ness. Prāṇnāth also says the same thing.

e main main payon e maran nahin āur kahāvat hai murdā |
jāde nuru jamāl ke, ehi hai pardā ||
"Why does this "I" not die, though it is called dead;
this is veil which hides the Divine beauty.")[46]

Thus we find that Prāṇnāth has made the best use of his acquaintance with Islam and Sufism to preach his religious views. His quatrains bear ample evidence of his being well versed in Islamic and Sufi learnings; and his knowledge of Islam and Sufism seems to be deeper than the founders of other religious sects. He had used innumerable Sufi terminologies, and it is not possible to discuss all of them in this paper. However the foregoing passages are enough to give an idea about the extent of Islamic and Sufi influence on his religious movement. The fact of the matter is that Prānnāth's religious teaching is so much influenced by Islamic teachings and Sufi doctrines that it can never be understood or appreciated without a good knowledge of Islam and Sufism.

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14

The Life and Mission of Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār

N. JAGADEESAN

The dictum that hails Śiva as the sovereign of the southern country is indicative of the antiquity of Śaivism in the Tamil land. Bhakti is one of the main ideas of Śaivism. Caitanya (fifteenth century AD) "is generally, but erroneously, regarded as the great introducer into South India of this idea of *bhakti*."[1] That is because the *bhakti* of the Vaiṣṇava Āḷvārs and the Śaiva Nāyanmārs was several centuries prior to him. Even though the *Padma Purāṇa*[2] and the *Śrī Bhāgavata*[3] state that *bhakti* originated in the Drāviḍa country, the emergence of a clearly delineated personal God can be detected only in the *Gītā*. But, it is not definitely known when and how that *bhakti* percolated to the South. "We have lost the historical link between the early *bhakti* movement of the North and the movement in the South."[4] Yet it is just possible that it was an independent development, though not perhaps absolutely so. The loving piety that characterises *bhakti* popularised Śaivism. "The theory of devotion made inroads upon the inexorability of fate, and men in distress turned to God as a sure shield against misfortune."[5] Just like the temple worship, pilgrimage and devotional hymns, the hagiological accounts too flanked *bhakti* to promote the cause of Śaivism. Unable to bear agony, some may turn pessimistic and wonder whether life is worth living. It is at such a juncture that the biographies of saints, contained in the religious texts, offer solace and provide inspiration and strength. The saints of Śaivism were active participants in God's grace and "shared their nectarine experiences with the masses."[6] In his *Tiruttoṇḍattogai*, a breviary of Śaiva dovotees, Sundaramūrthi, the last of the *Tevārām*-trio, pays homage to the sixty-three Nāyanmārs. Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār is one of the three women who find mention in it, the other two being Maṅgaiyarkkaraśiyār (wife of the Pāṇḍya king, Ninṛaśīr Neḍumāṛan) and Iśaiñāniyār (mother of Sundaramūrthi). It is a common knowledge that the Hindu women saints were invariably the followers of the *bhakti* cult. Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār is renowned for Śiva-*bhakti*. She is an excellent exponent of 'the fervent, self-negating love and worship of Śiva.' Śékkiḷār has versified her life and fortunes in his *Peria Purāṇam*.[7] Notwithstanding a supernatural overtone, characteristic of the typical Indian way of describing the saints, it reveals the integrity of her devotion to the supreme being and the quest for higher spiritual attainment.

Punidavati was the only daughter of Danadattan, a leading and wealthy Vaiśya in Kāraikkāl,[8] a coastal town in the Coḷa country. From the very tender days of her childhood, her devotion to Śiva was unlimited. She delighted in extolling His praises even while at play. She was accustomed to pay obeisance to the Śivanaḍiyārs on sight. As days passed, she grew up as a charming damsel. Thereupon, Danadattan began to think about her marriage for settling her in life. At that time, Nidipati, a notable Vaiśya in Nāgaippaṭṭinam,[9] was in search of a suitable bride for his son, Paramadattan. Nidipati's men contacted Danadattan in this regard. And Danadattan consented to give his daughter in marriage to Paramadattan. Eventually the marriage between Paramadattan and Punidavati was solemnized on an auspicious day at Kāraikkāl. As Punidavati was his darling daughter, Danadattan was unwilling to part with her. He quartered both Punidavati and Paramadattan in a beautifully built mansion, not far from his own, in Kāraikkāl. Moreover, he provided them with abundant means to lead a happy life. With the acquisition of a bounteous affluence and a heightened status, Paramadattan shot up as a businessman in Kāraikkāl. Punidavati's Śiva-*bhakti* was unceasingly ever on the increase notwithstanding her excellence in domesticity. Whenever the Śivanaḍiyārs visited, she fed them sumptuously and gifted them gold, rich gems and good clothings generously.

One morning, Paramadattan was away from home. Some persons met him and gave him two mangoes. He met their needs and sent the mangoes home. Punidavati received the fruits and kept them inside. Then, an old and famished Śivanaḍiyār entered the house. She welcomed him whole-heartedly. As he came in, she gave him water to clean his feet. Next, she laid the plate and called him for dinner although it was not yet time for lunch. She had cooked only rice by then. Neither curry, nor any other side-dish was ready. Nevertheless, her conviction that no fortune was worthier than officiating as a host for an exceptional guest like the starving Śivanaḍiyār impelled her to decide upon appeasing his appetite at once. So, she served the cooked rice first. Then, she swiftly brought one of the two mangoes sent by her husband and placed it on the plate as an additional dish. The simple dinner ended his hunger. Immensely pleased with her kind hospitality, he blessed her and went away.

After the Śivanaḍiyār had gone, Punidavati completed the rest of the cooking. Around noon, Paramadattan returned home. He took a nice bath and then arrived for dinner. Punidavati served him dinner in order and then put the remaining mango on the plate. Finding its good taste, he asked for the other one too. Disinclined to deny him what he desired and urged by implicit obedience, Punidavati moved inside as if she would fetch it. Alas! What could she do in such a predicament? Stricken with grief, she stood there forgetting about herself completely and meditating intensely upon the holy feet of Śiva and praying for his succour. Instantly she got a mango due to His grace. She rushed to Paramadattan and gave that to him gladly. The divine mango tasted more delicious than nectar. So, Paramadattan seriously doubted if it was the same sent by him. Declaring that such a mango could never by obtained in all the three worlds, he enquired wherefrom did she get it. The thought that Śiva's grace and grant were beyond expression silenced her. But, her fidelity pointed out the impropriety in not answering her husband. Anyway, it was her moral obligation to expose all that had happened. So, she recounted everything.

After hearing the full account, the unconvinced Paramadattan told her to obtain another similar mango as a proof of Śiva's grace. Punidavati went inside again. She had no other go but to pray once more. She prayed by saying that if Śiva did not grant her one more mango, her words that she got the previous one by His grace would be falsified. At once, there was a new mango, which she offered her husband. With great wonder he took it from her. But, it disappeared suddenly. Shocked by this, he was perplexed and frightened. Fancying that Punidavati was a venerable deity, he began to shun her. To leave her permanently was his ulterior motive. Stating that he intended to go on a lucrative overseas trade, he started necessary preparations. Ships were built and fully equipped with merchandise. On a good day, he commenced his commercial voyage. After earning a huge wealth in the course of his foreign trade, Paramadattan set sail again and landed in a city in the Pāṇḍya country. He arranged for multiplying his wealth, wedded a Vaiśya lady of that place and settled there itself happily. He had a daughter by his second wife. He named the child Punidavati after his first wife, whom he still remembered and revered as a divinity.

In Kāraikkāl, Punidavati was managing her home singly and awaiting her husband's return. The news about the prosperous life of Paramadattan in a city in the Pāṇḍya country reached Kāraikkāl. Punidavati's relatives ascertained its veracity and felt greatly concerned. They resolved to conduct her to Paramadattan. So, they proceeded to the Pāṇḍya country and Punidavati accompanied them in a curtained and gem-set palanquin. Within a few days, they were in the vicinity of their destination and immediately conveyed the news of their arrival to Paramadattan. Paramadattan, followed by his second wife and his young daughter, hastened to meet them. On seeing Punidavati, he fell at her feet along with his two dependents and said that he owed his life to her grace and that his child was given only her name. His action aroused fear in the timid Punidavati, who moved closer to her relatives. Flushed with shame, they asked him to explain his conduct of making obeisance to his wife. He replied that Punidavati was not a human mortal but a goddess and that he left her and named his daughter after her only on that account. Further, he wanted them also to worship her feet. Paramadattan's idea thus becoming clear. Punidavati was resolute in shedding her beauty-clad mass of flesh so long sustained by her only for his sake. With her thoughts firmly fixed on the holy feet of Śiva, she prayed for the conferment of the "Pēy Uru" (ghosthood) on her for the benefit of eternal worship of Śiva. As per her wish, true ñāna (*jñāna*, knowledge) permeated her mind while she was skeletonized. The rain of flowers, the tunes of the divine music, the great *éclat* among the *ṛṣis* and the ecstatic dance of the Śivagaṇas coincided with the reverential transformation of Punidavati. Her relatives were alarmed and went away worshipping her. With the blossoming of Śiva-*ñana*, she sang the *Aṛpuda Tiruvandādi* on Śiva.

Later, she composed the *Tiruviraṭṭai Maṇimālai*, again on Śiva. Then, she went northwards to meet Śiva in His holy abode, the Kayilai Mountain (Kailāsa). Her ghastly appearance terrified and dispersed the people who met her. She never minded that. She needed recognition by Śiva only. Hence her little concern over the mundane views about her appearance. Crossing rapidly the northern countries, she reached the foot of the Kayilai. Instead of scaling that holy mountain by foot, she resorted to climb it by head. Pārvatī, the consort of Śiva, noticed the bony spectre ascending the Kayilai by head and expressed wonder. Śiva told Pārvatī that she was His devotee who sought and got that noble form. At her approach, Śiva addressed her as "Ammai" (mother) and accosted her. Calling Him "Appa" (father), she prostrated before Him. Thereupon, Śiva readily granted her wishes, viz., everlasting and delectable Śiva-*bhakti;* termination of birth (personal salvation); if, perchance, born again, never to forget Him (the state of perpetual Śiva-consciousness, unworried about and unwearied of being born again); and, singing joyously His glory while witnessing His dance from below His holy feet. Śiva then bid her go to Ṭiruvālaṅgāḍu[10] in the South (the Tamil land) for witnessing His dance, deriving Śivānanda (bliss of Śiva) and singing His glory for ever. Worshipfully bidding Him adieu, she left for Tiruvālaṅgāḍu by head. She had the *darśana* of Śiva there. Delightfully watching His *tāṇḍava* (fierce dance), she celebrated it in her devotional hymns, known as the *Tiruvālaṅgāṭṭu Mūtta Tiruppadigams.* Since then she always remained under the lifted foot of the dancing Śiva.[11]

Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār is alluded to by the *Tevārām* psalmists, namely Tiruñāna Sambandar, Tirunāvukkaraśar and Sundaramūrthi.[12] So, she lived before the *Tevārām* times. When her compositions are compared with the Saṅgam works and the Tevārām hymns, it appears that she belonged to the period intervening between the Saṅgam Age and the Tevārām epoch. In all fairness, she may be assigned to the fourth-fifth centuries AD. In the *Yāpparunkalam Virutti Urai*, the commentator gives a stanza[13] by Bhūdattār and Kāraikkāl Pēyār to illustrate the Āriḍam type of poem. Some presume that this Bhūdattār was the same as Bhūdattāḷvār and conclude that Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār and Bhūdattāḷvār were contemporaries.[14] They are clearly misled by the similarity in the names "Bhūdattār" and "Bhūdattāḷvār". There is no evidence to prove that these two were one and the same. The biographical account of Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār does not evince anything to make the claim that she was a party to this joint authorship. The mentioned illustrative stanza is perhaps an interpolation. In fact, Nachchinārkkiniyar, the reputed medieval commentator, puts an end to this dicussion. Citing the same stanza in his commentary on the *Tolkāppiam-Poruḷadhikāram*, he gives the names of Avvaiyār and Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār as its authors.

In the study of Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār, there is an interesting but intriguing controversy connected with her original name. She is generally known by three names: Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār, Pēyār and Punidavati. While the name "Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār" does not pose any problem, the controversy centres round the other two names. In the name "Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār", the "Ammaiyār" is honorific and refers to her since Śiva is believed to have addressed her so,[15] while "Kāraikkāl" denotes her native place about which there prevails complete unanimity of opinion. Her original name, as given by Śēkkiḷār, is Punidavati[16] and he was the first to divulge it. None of the pre-Śēkkilār Śaiva leaders like Tiruñāna Sambandar, Tirunāvukkaraśar, Sundaramūrthi and Nambi Āndar Nambi has mentioned her as "Punidavati". Even as lale as the eighteenth century, Tiruvāvaḍuturai Śivañāna Munivar preferred to call her simply "Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār".[17] Now, it is argued that "Punidavati" was an imaginary name and that "Pēyār" was her original name.[18] In support of this, the internal evidence from her poetical works is cited, as she calls herself "Kāraikkāl Pey."[19] This is reinforced by Sundaramūrthi's reference to her as "Pēyar".[20] In the first place, the name "Punidavati", whether original or invented, fits Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār will, because it means and denotes an impeccable pure person. Next, Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār, in one of her poems, describes herself as a "Peṇ Pēy" (female ghost).[21] In another context, she emphatically states her position as "Pēyāya Nal Gaṇattil Oṇṟāya Nam".[22] It means that she belonged to the Śivagaṇas, namely the virtuous host of ghosts. Hence Śēkkiḷār's remark that her ghost form drew veneration from both the celestials and the terrestrials.[23] From the days of Kāraikkāl Ammīyār to those of Tiruvāvaḍuturai Śivañāna Munivar, every Śaiva dignitary who referred to her either as "Pēyār" or as "Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār" did so reflecting only upon the post-transformation stage of her life. It may be noted that Śēkkilār too refrained from using the name "Punidavati" after her metamorphosis. The pertinent question, however, is whether the appellation "Pēyār" is indicative of her spiritual status. In the Saṅgam works, there are references to the Pēy Magaḷir and the Pēy Peṇḍir. They were priestesses. Pēy Magaḷ Iḷaveyini, a poetess of the Saṅgam period, is an instance. In her name, "Iḷaveyini" means that she was born of the hunter community and "Pēy Magaḷ" Signifies that she was a priestess. "Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār described as a Pēy was perhaps a Dēvarāṭṭi or a priestess and so a Pēy Magaḷ officiating in the worship of Śiva."[24] Incidentally, even the names of the first three Āḷvārs in Śrī Vaiṣṇavism (Poigai, Bhūdam and Pēy, grouped together as the Mudal Āḷvārs) are symbolic and not literal.

The speculations regarding her assumption of "ghosthood" vary. It is perhaps an indication of remaining completely detached from worldly fetters. With a supreme unconcern for the physique, she might have starved so much to become very thin and to facilitate the promotion of her soul. Probably, such an appearance enabled her to avoid others and continue the Śiva-pūjā undisturbed. The main point, however, is that she gave up her domestic life and worldliness only when her husband deserted her. Till then she was performing her duties both as a housewife and as a devotee of Śiva. When her husband no longer needed her, she was exclusively in the domain of Śiva. Therefore, it was a total renunciation on her part; that includes her flesh, beauty and youthfulness as well. She emerged a staunch votary of Śaivism, dedicating herself to Śiva entirely.

It is said that "the victories won for the cause of Śaivism were through miracles",[25] performed not by the Nāyanmārs alone but by Śiva too. Thrice in Kāraikkāl Ammaiyar's life, Śiva did miracles—twice to get her divine mangoes and the third time to change her figure. What is the rationale behind this Śiva-*līlā* ? It involves the principle of election, notable in the Śaiva Siddhānta. Briefly stated, "Śiva chooses His devotees". Superb devotion was the *raison d'être* in the operation of Śiva's grace in favour of Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār. In her own words, ever since the days she learnt to speak as a child, she excelled in her loving piety to Śiva and attuned her thoughts to His holy feet.[26] Here extraordinary Śiva-*bhakti* is further unravelled when she firmly states that her adoration for Śiva would remain always unsevered in her heart even if He did not condescent to weed out her misery, show her compassion and indicate the True Path to her.[27]

In Tamil Śaivism, the respect shown to the Śivanaḍiyārs tantamounts to respecting Śiva Himself. This respect does not stop short with the mental, visual and verbal processes, but extends to the realm of meeting their needs. The main service, of course, is offering them food. This is technically known as Māheśvara Pūjā. Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār's life is a pointer in this respect.[28] Apart from her, the Nāyanmārs like Iyaṛpagai, Iḷaiyānkuḍi Māṛan, Appūdi

Aḍigaḷ and Śiṟuttoṇḍar have worshipped the Śivanaḍiyārs.

The *Aṟpuda Tiruvandādi*, the *Tiruviraṭṭai Maṇimālai* and the *Tiruvālangāṭṭu Mūtta Tiruppadigams* constituted Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār's devotional works. They are included in the eleventh *Tirumuṟai.*[29] However, at no stage in the account of her life has there been any reference to her gaining of literary knowledge or any other scholarship, although her Śiva-*bhakti* and service to the Śivanadiyārs have been spoken of. But, Śēkkiḷār has pointed out her attainment of Nāna[30] at the time of the devolution of spiritual form upon her. That resulted in her devotional outpourings. Further, out of the sixty-three Nāyanmārs only seven were versifiers and their works form part of the twelve *Tirumurais*. The seven who have that distinction are the three *Tevāram* hymnologists, Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār Tirumūlar, Aiyaḍigaḷ Kāḍavan Kōn and Chēramān Perumāḷ. Therefore, Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār has an exalted position in both Tamil and Śaivism.

The *Aṟpuda Tiruvandādi* is held to be the first among her works. It belongs to the Andādi category of the Prabandhas and has one hundred and one Veṇbās. The prefix "Aṟpuda" does not mean "wonder" but "Nāna" out of which the work arose.[31] While explaining the meaning of "Aṟpuda Mūrthi", Śaṅkara Namaśivāyar says that "Aṟpuda" stands for "Ñāna."[32] According to Madurai Śivaprakāśar, the Ñāna derived from divine grace is the one that was possessed by those life the Mūvar Mudaligaḷ (*Tēvārma*-trio) and Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār.[33] Therefore, it is no wonder that the *Aṟpuda Tiruvandādi* penetrates the inscrutable Śiva-*ñāna.*[34] Moreover, Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār has the credit of having created the first wholesome Andādi in Tamil. In the *Padiṟṟuppattu*, a Saṅgam work, the Fourth *Ten* by Kappiyāṟṟu Kāppiyanār is an Andādi. But, in this Andādi, the last word of the work lacks synchronization with the commencing word of the work, though the last word in each verse synchronizes with the first word of the immediately following verse. The *Aṟpuda Tiruvandādi*, however, is the earliest in Tamil possessing all the features of an Andādi. It is a simple and pleasing work, capable of melting the hearts of the devotees. It dwells upon the deeds, reputation and manifestations of Śiva and also exposes the spiritual experiences of Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār.

The *Tiruviraṭṭai Maṇimālai*[35] has twenty verses. Retaining the features of an Andādi, it is woven into a garland of poems consisting of ten Kaṭṭaḷai Kalitturais and ten Veṇbās, the former ten preceding the latter ones. Among the Iraṭṭai Maṇimālais available in Tamil, that of Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār is belived to be the earliest. The ten Kaṭṭaḷai Kalitturois by her opened up a new vista in Tamil poetical composition and became specimen for the later-day poets. Moreover, certain intricacies of Śaivism relating to the significance of prononucing the Pañcākṣara,[36] of worshipping the Lord's feet,[37] of meditating upon Śiva,[38] and of respecting the Śivanaḍiyārs[39] are found embedded in the *Tiruviraṭṭai Maṇimālai.*

The *Tiruvālangāṭṭu Mūtta Tiruppadigams* are just two decads on the presiding deity of the Tiruvālaṇgāḍu Śiva temple. Each decad (*padigam*) has eleven songs. Both the decads describe Śiva's dance, the burial ground as the stage exhibiting the dance and the deeds of the ghosts there. The first decad commences with the words "Koṅgai Tiraṅgi" and the second decad with the words "Eṭṭi Ilavam". The eleventh song in each of these decads is the Tiru Kaḍaikkāppu (closing verse). These set certain remarkable literary trends for the future. *One*, the vogue of calling ten songs collectively as a *padigam* emanated in the days of Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār and was well established during the *Tēvāram* period. Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār thus emerges as a pioneer in the art of composing *padigams.* Hence the attribute "Mūtta" (senior) to her decads. *Two*, the utility of the Tiru Kaḍaikkāppu in the historical, literary and religious arenas is real. The Tiru Kaḍaikkāppu of the "Kongai Tiraṅgi" decad and that of the "Eṭṭi Ilavam" decad disclose the name and native place of their authoress as "Kāraikkāl Pēy". Further, they specify the benefits accrued by reciting them, viz., Śiva-gati and bliss if the "Koṅgai Tiraṅgi" decad is mastered; and, nullification of sins if the "Eṭṭi Ilavam" decad is recited. The concluding verse of the *Aṟpuda Tiruvandādi* too mentions "Kāraikkāl Pēy" and assures of union with Śiva as an outcome of the immesurable love towards Him unleashed by reciting the work. Perhaps the advice given at the end of such works "induced one to read the verses and derive the spiritual merit mentioned therein. Possibly, this indirectly helped the growth of Śaivism."[40] In later times, Tirumūlar (fifth-sixth centuries AD) in his *Tirumandiram*, Paraṇa Dēvar (different from the Saṅgam poet Paraṇar) in his *Śivaperuman Andādi*, Tiruñāna Sambandar and Sundaramūrthi in their *Tēvāram* hymns employed this technique of Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār. *Three*, she has yet another credit of setting her two *padigams* to music. The "Koṅgai Tiraṅgi" decad is set to the Naṭṭapāḍai tune and the "Eṭṭi Ilavam" decad is set to the Indaḷam tune. In Tamil literature, setting devotional songs to music is traceable to the *Paripāḍal*. But, among the sixty-three Nāyanmārs, Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār was the first to combine music and versification. According to the *Śēkkiḷār Purāṇam*, the three great Nāyanmārs who possessed both the literary and musical skill were Karaikkāl Ammaiyār, Tiruñāna Sambandar and Tirunāvukkaraśar.[41] Music is a medium or method of approaching the Almighty for praising His traits and of invoking His compassion. So, music is closely knit in the temple worship, apart from being an integral part of the social life. Like that, dance too embroiders the religious fabric. Hence Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār's characteristic but succinct message, "Pādi Āḍa" (by singing and dancing), to the devotees.[42]

In her poems, she addresses Śiva mostly as "Endai" (my father) or as "Appā" (father). She exhorts the people to enshrine Him in their thoughts, "an easy approach".[43] Śiva resides in the thoughts of the true devotees.[44] Textual knowledge leads nowhere, as He appears in the form in which He is thought of.[45] Wherever He might be, surely He is very near and that too in the heart itself.[46] He is the earth, water, fire, wind, space, sun, moon and soul, and thereby manifesting Himself as the Aṣṭamūrti.[47] He creates, destroys and protects.[48] Those who worship Him with the realization that nothing happens without His will are protected by Him from being born again.[49] He sees Himself, graces the soul with the knowledge to see and then through that knowledge sees along with the soul.[50] Only His grace ends birth and shows the Truth that leads to Liberation.[51] Even if destined to undergo seven births, service is to Śiva only, and to none else.[52] While facing formidable sufferings, He must be praised without losing heart.[53] He protects those who surrender to Him.[54] To conquer death, to avoid hell and to destroy *karma*, surrender to Him.[55] He cannot bear the sight of the sufferings of the devotees.[56] At the very sight of the shadow of those who worship His true devotees, *karma* disappears.[57] In serving His devotees and in doing Śiva-pūjā lies the blemishless pride.[58] Pronouncing the Pañcākṣara, the mantra *par excellence*, leads to the Lord's feet.[59] Even those who lead a faultless life are burnt in the heap of dry wood after death and, therefore, the greatness of Śiva must be realized before that occurs.[60] The later-day Tamil Śaivism reflects Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār's religious views consistently

Outside the purview of religion, her works win appreciation for their lucidity and outspokenness: Some of her poems are quite enjoyable on account of the spotless innocence and natural humour as well as the intimacy while conversing with Śiva contained in them. For instance, she asks Śiva what would He do if Pārvatī, on His left side, came to know of the presence of Gaṅgā on His head.[61] Then, she wants to know what would Śiva do if the Ganges flows out torrentially by piercing His matted hair and carrying the crescent and the sanke away.[62] She is at a loss to understand how His neck turned dark while the mouth that ate the posion did not.[63] Then, she enquires Śiva whether His dance in the burial ground was meant for Pārvatī to see or done for the sake of the ghosts (Śiva-gaṇas).[64] With an amazing frankness she tells Śiva, "How can I approach You with Love when the coiling snake and the chain of skulls are on You?"[65] Referring to the snake on Him, she advises Śiva thus: "Never touch that hissing snake."[66] This advice displays the motherly care and desire to ward off any possible harm to Śiva. The legend that Śiva regarded her as His mother was perhaps founded on the words expressive of her concern for Him.

REFERENCES

[1] G.U. Pope (tr.), *The Tiruvāchagam*, p. lxvii.

[2] Vide *Kalaikkaḷañjiam*, vol. VI, p. 625.

[3] Book XI, chap. 5, *ślokas* 38-40.

[4] K A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Development of Religion in South India*, p. 39.

[5] Bhagavan Das, *The Cultural Heritage of India*, vol. IV, p. 7.

[6] Ratna Ammaiyar Navaratnam, *Siddhānta Saivam in Essence and Manifestation*, p. 7.

[7] St. 1 to 65, *Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār Purāṇam* in Sargham V of *Peria Purāṇam*. Śekkiḷār's *Peria Purāṇam* is a long hagiology in epic style. It contains an elaborate account of the 63 Nāyanmārs noticed in Sundarmūrthi's concise *Tiruttoṇḍattogai* which was dilated in Nambi Āṇḍār Nambi's *Tiruttoṇḍār Tiruvandādi* to a limited extent.

[8] Kāraikkāl is now included in the Union Territory of Pondicherry and lies between Tharaṅgambadi and Nāgaippaṭṭinam in the Thanjavur district of Tamil Nadu State.

[9] Nāgaippaṭṭinam, a Cola port and town, is in the Thanjavur district of Tamil Nadu State.

[10] Tiruvālaṅgāḍu, near Arakkonam, is 59 km west of Madras central. From the Tiruvālaṅgāḍu Railway Station, the Śiva temple is 5 km away. This temple is hallowed in the Śaiva parlance as Ratna Sabhā (hall of gems). In sanctity, it is similar to Chidambaram (golden hall) and Madurai (silver hall). According to legends, Śiva performed the Ūrdhva Tāṇḍava lifting His left foot to the level of

the head and defeating Kāḷi in their proverbial dance contest here.

[11] The ascension of Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār was on the day when the Svāti asterism held sway during Paṅguni (March-April). In the Tiruvālaṅgadu temple, her image in worshipping posture is found beneath the raised foot of Siva. She has a separate shrine in Kāraikkāl. In all the major Śiva temples, where the 63 Nāyanmārs are consecrated, she is depicted as seated on a pedestal. In the Dārāśuram temple (2 km south-west of Kumbakoṇam in the Thanjavur District), her ascent on the Kayilai by head is sculptured on the *vsmāna*. Along with the images of other Nāyanmārs, her image is also taken in procession and honoured during the Aṛupattu Mūvar Utsavam (the festival of the 63). In the Kapalīśvarar temple in Mylapore (Madras), it is observed on the day following the Car Festival during Paṅguni (March-April). The Māṅgani Utsavam (the mango festival), famous in Kāraikkāl, is on annual celebration on the full moon day of Āni (June-July).

[12] All the three *Tēvāram* authors refer to her with respect. Tiruñāna Sambandar preferred not to tread on Tiruvalaṅgāḍu and stayed on its outskirts in deference to Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār having gone there by head (St. 1008 to 1010, Tiruñāna Sambandar Purāṇam in Sargham VI of *Peria Purāṇam*).

[13] The stanza commences with the words "Kaṛaippaṛ Perumōṭṭu".

[14] A.V. Subramania Aiyar holds this view and confesses his inability to understand the circumstances demanding the two to jointly compose an Āriḍam stanza (A.V. Subramania Aiyar, *Tamiḷ Ārāichchiyin Valarchchi*, p. 162, fn. 1). M. Raghava Aiyangar too held that Bhūdattār and Bhūdattāḷvār were the same (Vide K. Vellaivaranan, *Panniru Tirumuṛai Varalāṛu*, pt. II, p. 542).

[15] St. 28, *Tiruttoṇḍar Tiruvandādi*; St. 58, 59 and 65, Karaikkāl Ammaiyār Purāṇam, ibid.

[16] St. 2, Karaikkal Ammaiyar Puraṇām, ibid.

[17] Vide *Tiruttoṇḍār Tirunāmakkovāi* by Tiruvāvaḍuturai Śivañāna Munivar.

[18] Marai Tirunavakkarasu, *Peria Purāṇa Āivurai*, pp. 80-81.

[19] St. 11, Koṅgai Tiraṅgi decad; St. 11, Eṭṭi Ilavam decad; St. 101, *Aṛpuda Tiruvandādi*.

[20] St. 4, Tiruttoṇḍattogai.

[21] St. 1, Koṅgai Triangi decad.

[22] St. 86, *Aṛpuda Tiruvandādi*.

[23] St. 50, Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār Purāṇam, ibid.

[24] N. Subrahmaniam, *Pre-Pallavan Tamil Index*, p. 605.

[25] C.V. Narayan Aiyar, *Origin and Early History of Saivism in South India*, p. 206. "It is regretted that there are people who distrust a story because it involves miracles; and a mircale is a phenomenon which cannot be accounted for by the known scientific laws; but it is a fact that no science is complete and perfect: for the law that are yet to be known are many and may far exceed those that are already discovered. What is considered a mircle today may turn out, on the discovery of the appropriate laws, to be commonplace tomorrow; hence it is evident that the account given in the *Peria Purāṇam* cannot be dismissed as worthless on account of the miracles in them" (V.Ponniah, *Śaiva Siddhanta Theory of Knowledge*, p. 49).

[26] St. 1, *Aṛpuda Tiruvandādi*.

[27] St. 2, ibid; also, St. 23 ibid.

[28] The Śivanaḍiyārs are "mobile temples''. The *Tirumandiram Śivañāna Bodam, Śivañāna Siddhiyār* and other Śiva Siddhānta works lay stress upon reverence to the Sivanaḍiyārs.

[29] The *Tirumuṟais*, numbering 12 and called the *Panniru Tirumuṟai*, are the canonical Śaiva works in Tamil.

[30] St. 52, Kāraikkal Ammaiyār Purāṇam, ibid.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Saṅkara Nāmaṣivāyar's commentary on the *Nannūl Śirappu Pāyiram.*

[33] Madurai Śivaprakāśar's commentary on St. 10 of *Śivaprakāśam.*

[34] St. 20, 21, 30, 31, 33, 45, 87, 91 in *Aṟpuda Tiruvandādi.*

[35] "Iraṭṭai Mālai Andādi" is the name given to it by *Śēkkiḷār* (vide St. 53, Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār Purāṇam, ibid.).

[36] St. 10, *Tiruviraṭṭai Maṇimālai.*

[37] St. 9, ibid.

[38] St. 4 and 6, ibid.

[39] St. 11, ibid.

[40] M.Rajamanikkam, *Development af Śaivism in South India*, p. 47.

[41] St. 46, *Śēkkilār Purāṇam.*

[42] St. 11, "Eṭṭi Ilavam" decad.

[43] St. 46, *Aṟpuda Tirvandādi.*

[44] St. 45, ibid.

[45] St. 19, *Tiruviraṭṭai Maṇimālai.*

[46] St. 6, *Aṟpuda Tiruvandādi.*

[47] St. 20 and 21, ibid.

[48] St. 5, ibid.

[49] St. 2, *Tiruviraṭṭai Maṇimālai.*

[50] St. 20, *Aṟpuda Tiruvandādi.*

[51] St. 9, *Tiruviraṭṭai Maṇimālai.*

[52] St. 3, ibid.

[53] St. 1, ibid.

[54] St. 4 and 6, ibid.

[55] St. 81, *Aṟpuda Tiruvandādi.*

[56] St. 3, *Tiruviraṭṭai Maṇimālai.*

[57] St. 11, ibid.

[58] St. 79 *Aṟpuda Tiruvandādi.*

[59] St. 10, *Tiruviraṭṭai Maṇimālai.*

[60] St. 20, ibid.

[61] St. 5, ibid. Tirunāvukkaraśar repeats this idea in his *Tiruviruttam* hymn.

[62] St. 90, *Aṟpuda Tiruvandādi.*

[63] St. 89, ibid.

[64] St. 99, ibid.

[65] St. 17, *Tiruviraṭṭai Maṇimālai.*

[66] St. 7, ibid.

15

Religion and Social Change in Tamil Nadu (*c*. AD 600-1300)

R. CHAMPAKALAKSHMI

Tamil society characterized by caste hierarchy with a sharp division into two main categories i.e. the brāhmaṇa or priestly caste and the śūdras or non-brāmhaṇa castes and dominated by the Puranic religions of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism, evolved between the seventh and thirteenth centuries, as a result of a major transformation from a tribal to a peasant society. The processes of change are seen at work mainly in the sphere of religion through what is popularly known as the *bhakti* movement, which provided a powerful ideology for the simultaneous widening of the material base and integration of the various components of Tamil culture—social, economic and political.

Failure to perceive the interconnection between religion and socio economic changes and lack of scientific approach have lead earlier studies on religion and society to view these as isolated developmets. The main concern in this paper is to focus attention on such interrelationships in the context of early medieval Tamil Nadu.

These developments may be discussed under two broad chronological phases based on the major trends in the evolution of socio-religious institutions and their role in economic and political integration. The first phase may be dated between the seventh and ninth centuries AD and the second from the tenth to thirteenth centuries, the twelfth century marking a crucial break for Śavism and a new orientation for Vaisnavism.

In order to understand the nature of changes from the seventh century AD, it is necessary to set forth briefly the pre-seventh century situation. The pre-seventh century tribal organisation, as reflected in the Saṅgam Tamil classics for the first three centuries of the Christian era, is represented by the eco-cultural divisions called *tiṇais*, each with its distinctive socio economic milieu and religious practices. The processes of change, already recognisable, were slow with several overlapping situations and were first visible in the *marudam tiṇai* i.e. the river valley with great potential for agrarian expansion and integration, the peripheral ecological zones being constantly brought into reciprocal relationship till their gradual absorption into the changing order in the subsequent periods.

A distinct trend indicating the change in the *marudam* region was the evolution of an agrarian base with well organised units called the *nāḍus* (*koṭṭam* in the northern parts, *kuṛṛam* in the southern parts of Tamil Nadu), sharing common agrarian problems and corporate activities and the introduction of a hierarchical caste structure. This transition is also reflected in the changing conception of a typical folk or tribal deity into a pre-eminent godhead i.e tribal deities assuming universal character due to a process of assimilation or absorption into or imposition of a local cult over the brahmanical religion e.g. the *marudam* god Vēndan being equated with Vedic Indra, the pastoral (*mullai*) deity Māyōn merging with Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa and the tribal deity of the hilly region Muruga becoming Skanda or Subrahmaṇya.

The second important trend was the acceptance of "non-orthodox" Buddhist and Jain religions by trading group engaged in maritime trade and inland exchange and the emergence of urban features in the coastal towns and inland centres of trade and administration.

The decline of maritime trade and conflict for acquiring and controlling agrarian resources led to a period of socio-religious tension between the orthodox-brāhmaṇical and non-orthodox sects from about the third-fifth century AD, a period viewed by the brahmanical records of the seventh-ninth centuries AD as one of domination by "evil kings" and one of set back for brahmanical social organisation.

The religious changes of the seventh-ninth centuries are hence viewed as a revival of orthodox forms, though not strictly a revival of Vedic religion *per se*. Marked by intense religious conflict, persecution and royal conversions in favour of the 'orthodox' religions, the first phase witnessed the establishment of Puranic religion through the *bhakti* cult supported by new institutional forms. It also represented the culmination of the process of acculturation i.e. the assimilation of folk cults into and imposition of local cults over the brahmanical religious systems of Vaiṣṇavism and

Śaivism. The religious aspects of the change are seen in the spread of Puranic and epic stories, new iconographic concepts, both Vaiṣṇava and Śiva, introduction of Āgamic worship and above all building of temples by the ruling families. New forms of art and architecture as seen in the Pallava-Pāṇḍya monuments, viz., the rock-cut mode of Drāviḍa architecture, innovations due to the introduction of stone for rock-cut and structural temples in the place of brick and other perishable materials, large-scale narrative sculptures and paintings of Puranic themes and bronze icons were the cultural manifestations of these changes.

These development are also reflected in the prolific literary output of the age, viz., the *Tēvāram* and *Divyaprabandham*, the sacred hymns respectively of the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* exponents and in the more direct and authentic copperplate and stone records of the Pallava Pāṇḍya ruling families of Kāñcipuram and Madurai. These epigraphic records register land grants to brāhmaṇas, the creation of *brahmadeyas* and land and other gifts to temples. In the economic sphere this period initiated a process of agrarian expansion through *brahmadeya* and temple-nucleated settlements and in the social sphere it led to the establishment of the hierarchical, brahmanical social order based on caste, constantly widening its orbit to integrate new elements.

The *brahmadeya* or brāhmaṇa settlement was created through land grants to brāhmaṇas by the ruling elite, either as an entirely new settlement or as a colony of brāhmanas among already existing peasant settlements, with the reciprocal purpose of extending brahmanical social order and stabilishing it by a process of Sanskritisation or acculturation and of bringing the peasant settlements into supportive relationship with the *brahmadeyas*. The popularisation of Puranic religion and Āgamic forms of worship was achieved through the ideology of *bhakti* or devotion expressed through the emotionally powerful hymns of the *bhakti* saints. The former was sponsored by elite groups for mutual benefits like social dominance and political influence. The latter assumed the form of a popular resurgence intended to bring a mystic religious experience within the reach of the uninitiated 'common' folk through a personal relationship i.e. communion between the individual and god through devotion. Hence its choice of the vernacular medium i.e. Tamil as against the 'alien' Sanskrit, which was used only in official bilingual records for extolling the lineage of a ruler claiming kṣatriya status and enhancing the importance of brāhmaṇas well versed in Vedic lore, Dharmaśāstras, Purāṇas and Āgamas.

The Tamil hymns were meant to give the movement popular appeal by spreading the Puranic stories and Āgamic worship. Hence their stress on idol-worship and the temple or house of god as the centre all socio-religious activities. The *bhakti* ideology thus helped in the transformation of Vedic brahmanism into the sectarian religions of Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism, both of which evolved out of older beliefs of popular worship and cult practices.

In the process Śaivism acquired a stronger and more extensive material base vis-a-vis Vaiṣṇavism. This was achieved through the incorporation of mother goodess worship, tribal and popular forms such as the tree and pillar and deities associated with funerary practices as the major components of Śaiva worship even from the Saṅgam age. By far the most significant factor was the inclusion of Muruga, a Tamil tribal deity, in the Śaiva pantheon, which appears to be more an imposition of a local cult rather than a mere upgrading of it due to brahmanisation. There are also some indications that Śiva was the deity of those groups, who constituted the lower categories of agricultural classes and craftsmen, professionally and socially differentiated from the higher agricultural groups and ruling families. Evidence on this point, which is crucial to an understanding of the later-day Śaivism, is scanty and indirect and mainly inferential, based on later social developments, in which lower agricultural groups and professional groups like artisans and craftsmen generally retained their earlier association with the subsidiary elements in the brahmanical pantheon.

In contrast, Viṣṇu's equation with Māyōn, the deity of the Mullai region and pastoral tribes, was perhaps the only major popular association with the Vedic Viṣṇu and the brahmanic god Nārāyaṇa. An important trend in Viṣṇu worship was its acceptance by and association with the ruling elite, especially so with the landed chieftains called *vēḷir*, who traced their descent from the Yādavas and whose lineage connections firmly established Kṛṣṇa-Viṣṇu worship among a number of ruling chieftains from the Saṅgam period onwards. More important was the concept of Viṣṇu as one who measured the earth, as the protector of earth, as the husband of Śrī or wealth and prosperity, and the inclusion of the earth goddess Bhūdevī as his second consort, in making Vaiṣṇavism the religion of the upper classes. To an extent Viṣṇu was alien to Tamil society although Kṛṣṇa's equation with Māyon was a major factor in his early popularity among the shepherd classes. One of the Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas, i.e. the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, personified *bhakti* as a *drāviḍa* maiden.

Puranic stories and iconographic representations emphasise the role of Śiva as destroyer of evil in the constantly repeated *daivāsura* motif. Similarly, the *avatāra* or reincarnation concept provided Viṣṇu with endless forms for protecting good against evil. The conceptual equation of the members of the royal family wlth Śiva and Viṣṇu offered immense scope for the attribution of divinity to royalty.

The role of the temple, the institutional force through which *bhakti* was spread, was equally significant, for the erection of temples at various places meant, apart from new shrines, also the conversion of local cult centres or spots where a tree or pillar within an enclosure served as a place of worship, into a shrine for Śaiva or Vaiṣṇava worship, more often the former. The priests of the local cult centres were evidently integrated into the new order or worship when such conversions took place. Such temple priests, particularly those called *Śiva-brāhmaṇas*, later came to be distinguished from the more orthodox *Smārta-brāhmaṇas*, or those who were followers of the Vedic and Smṛti rites, by an inferior rank among the *brāhmaṇa* sub-castes.

The sacred geography of the *Tēvāram* and *Divyaprabandham* shows that Vaiṣṇavism had its major centres in the northern and southernmost parts of Tamil Nadu and a few in the Kāveri delta region. On the contrary, Śaiva centres had their greatest concentration in the Coḷa region i.e. Kāverī valley and in around the Pallava and Pāṇḍya capitals Kāñcipuram and Madurai and their number was thrice that of Vaiṣṇava centres. Under the Coḷas Śaiva centres proliferated beyond the Kāverī region, at times even at the expense of Vaiṣṇavism.

The *bhakti* movement has often been characterised as a popular movement, a dissent or protest against the social hierarchy of the brahmanical order. Two aspects, however, need to be carefully examined in order to understand the character of this movement, i.e. the nature of its response to the challenge posed by the non-orthodox religions of Jainism and Buddhism and the extent to which it was a co-operative effort on the part of both the Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas. The second and more important aspect is the caste and occupational background of the early *bhakti* exponents and the degree to which protest or dissent against the established social division is evident in their hymns. That the nature of the response to non-orthodox challenge was direct and the opposition unequivocal in both the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava hymns is quite clear. Any co-operative efforts on the part of both the sections to spread anti-Jain and Buddhism ideas was incidental and evident only during the period from seventh to ninth centuries AD. They continued to be parellel movements throughout.

Among the Vaiṣṇava saints numbering twelve, two belonged to low castes, while the rest came from the brāhmaṇa castes, higher Vēḷāḷa and ruling classes. The Śaiva hymnists i.e. those who composed the *bhakti* hymns, were also of the higher castes and classes but later, in the twelfth century AD at the time of the codification of the Śaiva canon, a deliberate attempt was made to introduce several fictitious saints in addition to the historical figures to increase the number to 63, many of whom were drawn from low castes including the *paṛaiya* or untouchable. The number 63 was a direct borrowal from the Jaina Purāṇas dealing with the 63 *śalākāpuruṣas* or great beings.

The *bhakti* ideology emanated in an urban milieu. The propagators came mainly from the upper strata or castes but the movement acquired popular character with the inclusion of the members of the unprivileged castes like the potter, weaver, bard, fisherman, washerman, hunter and the untouchable *paṛaiya* (or *pulaya*) in the hagiological work of the twelfth century AD. However, the brāhmaṇa remained the medium through whom initiation into the *bhakti* religion and ritual forms of worship could take place. Thus the movement served only to prepetuate caste hierarchy by providing a niche for all new entrants, within the fourfold brahmanical framework, with graded ritual ranking.

The second major phase of societal transformation falls in the period of the Coḷas i.e. the tenth to thirteenth centuries AD. Initially, it was through the consolidation of the Śaiva religious network centreing round the temple that important developments took place. The rise and proliferation of monastic organisation throughout the region, particularly from the twelfth century. Monasteries represented the second institutional base for Śaivism and through them all extreme forms and non-conformist elements were integrated into temple organisation and hence as part of Tamil social organisation. The capacity to integrate the extreme forms of Śaivism like the Kālāmukha Pāśupata, the Kāpālika and the more outspoken non-conformists like the Siddhas enabled Śaivism to consolidate its base even at the cost of Vaiṣṇavism. The disparaging references to the Kāpālikas in the Purāṇas would suggest a non-orthodox milieu to their origin. The Kālāmukhas and Pāśupatas were a sect of social and religious reformers, more a group of non-conformists who were brought into the system, claimed brāhmaṇa status, and came to occupy a position of authority, through the headship of *maṭhas* in the ninth-tenth centuries and later through Coḷa royal patronage, as temple priests and royal preceptors. Their influence over *bhakti* tradition is clearly indicated by the repeated appearance of Śiva in the form of such asetics in the stories of the Śaiva saints to establish the greatness of Śaivism.

The *bhakti* movement also absorbed into it elements of Siddhism and Siddha philosophy. A less known aspect of Tamil religious history, the Siddhas, apart from practising medicine, alchemy and *Haṭha yoga*, also exhibited an anti-ritualism, anti-ceremonialism and even a suppression of 'devotion' or *bhakti* in favour of ethical principles and quest for knowledge. A more important social component was a pronounced radicalism expressed in their anti-brahmanism. The canonisation of Tirumūlar, one of the early Siddhas, as a Tamil *bhakti* saint, represents, therefore, the successful attempt of the twelfth century Śaiva protagonists to include an important non-orthodox element into the traditional Śaiva order.

The *Tirumandiram* which is a compendium of various forms of Śaivism and attributed to the authorship of Tirumūlar, emphasises the fundamental unity of the three highest paths of liberation by integrating Upaniṣadic knowledge, yogic technique and *bhakti*. More importantly, this text provides a very useful idea in equating the human body with the temple or house of god, a fit instrument for the soul in pursuit of self-discipline and search of god—an interesting alternative to the icon in the temple. A further point of interest is that the whole Śaiva Siddhānta philosophy is believed to spring "from this marvellous text", veritably a Tamil Āgama.

Direct royal participation in the development of temple centres and the use of temple to widen the sphere of royal authority was another major factor in the progress of Śaivism. This is seen in the series of measures adopted by the Coḷas to extend their political "visibility" to all regions. Structural temples in stone appeared from the tenth century AD in the Kāvārī valley, where the majority of Śaiva *bhakti* centres are located. The early Coḷas of ninth-tenth centuries either erected new temples at key centres or systematically converted existing brick temples of the pre-Coḷa period into stone structures, which helped to establish a religious network of Śaiva and also a few Vaiṣṇava centres to increase the extent of royal authority. The second step was to introduce the singing of *bhakti* hymns as an integral part of temple ritual and make land and other endowments for this purpose, thus adding to the element of propaganda. The collection of both Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva hymns has been assigned to the ninth-tenth centuries AD. A third measure was the apotheosis and worship of the hymnists among whom the Vaiṣṇava Tirumangai and the Śaiva *Tevāram* trio—Appar, Sambandar and Sundarar—and the philosopher hymnist Māṇiakkavācagar were prominent. Such measures were intensified in the eleventh century for Śaivism with a consciously less active patronage to Vaiṣṇavism.

The role of the temple as the institutional base for socio-religious and political influence is best illustrated by the Thanjavur and Gaṅgaikoṇḍacōlapuram temples, which were deliberate royal constructions representing major projects for enhancing royal power. By requisitioning the services of a variety of people from various parts of the Coḷa country for the Thanjavur temple, Rājarāja I integrated a cross-section of social and economic groups into temple service, thus making it a channel of social communication and economic activity. The introduction of dramatic enactments of plays narrating royal achievements including military victories, institution of festivals on royal birth asterisms, setting up of royal images in temples in addition to those of *bhakti* saints served to glorify royal power.

The establishment of educational institutions, hospitals and *maṭhas*, the last one obviously in imitation of Jain and Buddhist institutional organisations, emphasised the beneficial aspects of the temple's role and royal interest, a most persuasive use of religious guise for royal power. The most direct expression of the use of *bhakti* tradition for enhancement of royal authority was the inclusion among the canonised saints, of some Coḷa kings of both the pre-Vijayālaya (pre-ninth century) and post-Vijayālaya periods.

Temple building, gifts of *devadāna* villages and establishment of *brahmadeyas* and *agrahāras* continued throughout the Coḷa period.

But it is in the middle and late Coḷa periods that an architectural elaboration of temple structures, horizontal magnification, introduction of a rich variety of themes from hagiological works for sculptures and paintings took place, marking the growing ritual needs, increase in the temple's economic and socio-cultural activities. The degree of royal participation in the tenth-eleventh centuries was indisputably the highest, while in the twelfth-thirteenth centuries an increasing role was played in such activities by local landed magnates, itinerant merchant organisations and corporations of landowning groups like the *Cittiramēḻi periya nāḍu.*

The complexity of temple administration increased from the tenth to thirteenth centuries, for the sacred functions of huge temple centres invariably brought with in its sphere a large number of small settlements of *devadāna* villages and hamlets in its immediate neighbourhood or sometimes located at considerable distances. The socio-political links within this network and outside it were established by the temple which was entrusted to the care of local bodies like the *nāḍu, nagaram sabhā* and *ūr.*

In the latter part of the Coḷa period Śaivism further strengthened itself by the more direct involvement of non-brāhmaṇa elements in temple administration, establishment and maintenance of monastic organisations and by controlling the functions of collection and redistribution of resources. The changing pattern of land ownership seen in the inscriptions of the twelfth-thirteenth centuries indicate that apart from the brāhmana and *vēḷāḷa* land owners, weavers (*kaikkōḷas* and *sâliyas*), and merchants acquired greater control over land and participated in gift giving activities. Merchant bodies like the five hundred and landowners' organisations like the Citiramēḻi (composed of people from all the four castes) are seen in control of the administration of major temples. The *kaikkōḷas* and *devaraḍiyārs* are seen as members of the executive committees administering temples, showing that temples were no more exclusively in the hands of brāhmana and the higher category of *vēḷāḷa* land-owners.

Specialisation of crafts and revival of South Asian trade from the tenth century AD led to the creation of special quarters within the precincts of the temple centre ((*tirumaḍai viḷāgam*) for weavers, craftsmen, oil mongers etc. and separate quarters for members of trading guilds and markets. The interdependence of merchants and craftsmen is also emphasised by the more frequent references to special privileges and protection for *kammāḷas* (artisans) conferred through the good offices of traders and occasionally by local magnates, chieftains, and temple authorities. It is precisely at this point of time that the dual division of the Right- and Left-Hand castes (*valangai* and *iḍangai*) becomes an acknowledged social paradigm for the assignment social and ritual ranking to members of the lower caste groups i.e. those belonging to the artisan groups and lower categories of agricultural workers. The social privileges of the Right Hand being an important index of higher status, rivalry for status improvement became a constant feature in the relations between the Right- and Left-Hand castes, although they occasionally made common cause against the upper castes on matters affecting both. Thus evolved the tripartite social division into brāhmana, higher śūdra (*śat-śūdra*) and lower castes.

It is against this background that the twelfth century sectarian rivalry between Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas has to be viewed. In the earlier period the Śaivas and Vaiṣṇava sections of the *bhakti* movement shared the same sentiments of hostility to the Jains and Buddhists and condemned their rivals in no uncertain terms. The Śaiva hymnists in particular expressed deep animosity to their rivals but at the same time entertained no liberal sentiments towards the Vaiṣṇava religion, a veiled subordination of Vaiṣṇava concepts being a recurring theme in the Śaiva hymns. This came to fore in the twelfth century when Vaiṣṇava teachers like Rāmānuja made attempts to provide a wider popular base for Vaiṣṇavism through their reforms aimed at greater non-brāhmaṇa participation in temple rituals. Coḷa attitude towards Vaiṣṇavism was initially one of lukewarm support but later turned into neglect and active persecution at least by the time of Rāmānuja in the twelfth century.

Rāmānuja tried to bring about a synthesis between the Vedic, Sanskritic the Tamil Prabandhic tradition of the Āḷvars, between the metaphysical severity of the Vedānta and the personal and emotionally powerful *bhakti* or devotion, between the *varṇa* basis of Vedic social division and the sectarian orientation of *bhakti* in South India. His activities centred round the temple Śriraṅgam, where he strove to ensure the more complete participation of Viṣṇu worshippers of all social levels in some important aspects of ritual and managements. A new category of śūdra functionaries called the *sāttāda mudalis* (holy men who do not wear the sacred thread) came into existence. With some modifications his reforms were adopted even in the more conventional Vaiṣṇava sacred centres like Tirupati and later at Kāñci. To an extent, the worship of the twelve Āḻvārs, including the śūdra Nammālvār and the bard Tiruppāṇāḻvār was a result of this liberalism in temple worship.

Rāmānuja' liberalism was, however, not shared by his successors who tried to ensure that sect membership to all irrespective of caste did not affect caste identity, ranking and obligation. So by the fourteenth century there arose the well-known schism among the Vaiṣṇavas into the northern (*vaḍakalai*) and southern (*tenkalai*) schools mainly on the basis of their differences on the participation of low caste members in worship. The former stood for northern traditions, Sanskrit scriptures and more importantly narrow caste distinctions for retaining caste structure and ranking whereas the latter considered Tamil traditions as basic to Śrīvaiṣṇava religion, Prabandhic literature as the main canon and caste as no impediment to participation in worship. Due to political exigencies the Vijayanagar rulers found themselves inevitably drawn into a situation of supporting the orthodox stand of the northern school. The two sects of Śrīvaiṣṇavas became endogamous caste groups. While there was some provision for upward mobility for low caste groups, even the southern school tended not to assent to any claims by śūdras to brāhmaṇa identity. The monastic organisations and lineages of teachers of both the sects, who acquired increasing control over temple management, were headed only by brāhmaṇa teachers.

The twelfth century AD was in fact a crucial period for the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava movements and the Śaivas viewed the Vaiṣṇava attempts at reform as a serious threat to their strong religious network. Hence, the Śaiva *maṭhas* with non-brāhmaṇa leadership and increasing non-brāhmaṇa support began to take over temple management and administration. With the codification of the Śaiva canon in the twelfth-thirteenth centuries, the *maṭhas* took upon themselves the preservation of the Śaiva canon, consisting of the *bhakti* hymns and hagiological works to which were added a series of fourteen works on Śaiva philosophy composed in the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries AD, all of which were devoted to the interpretation of the Śaiva Siddhānta based on the *bhakti* tradition. The proliferation of such *maṭhas* with the leadership of non-brāhmaṇa teachers called the *mudaliyārs* resulted in the establishment of a widespread network, zealous in the preservation of the Śaiva canon together with control over the temple's economic resources. Monasteries have survived as a decisive force in the institutional base of the Śaiva religion from the twelfth century onwards down to modern times wielding considerable influence over non-brāhmaṇa Śaiva followers even today, just as much as Śaṅkara *maṭhas* over the brāhmaṇas (both Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava) of the present day.

16

The Dāsa-bhakti of the Āḷvārs

SUNITI KUMAR PATHAK

According to the traditions of worship of Viṣṇu prevalent in India since the Vedic period, the Āḷvārs claim a new dimension of meaningful submission (*bhakti*) to their endearing Lord. Tirumangai Āḷvār could spiritually visualise his Nārāyāṇa and praise as given below:

"He, who gives, bestows possessions like wealth etc., overcomes all troubles which shower upon, offers the highest abode availing prominence, strength and sublimity on account of his favour, fulfils much more than that my mother does, is Nārāyaṇa whom I see.

Kulam tarum shelvam tandiḍum adiyār /
  padu tuyar āyin ellām /
Nilantaram sheyyum noḷh vishumbu aruḷhum /
  arulhoḍu peru nilam alikkum /
Valam tarum arrum tandiḍum /
  perra tayinum āyin sheyyum /
Nalam tarum sholle nān kaṇḍu koṇḍen /
  nārāyaṇa ennum namam //[1] (III.9561)

Here lies its distinction from the Vedic cult of Viṣṇu worship flourished in the Indo-Gangetic plains in the olden days.

In the Vedas, Viṣṇu, a solar god is enumerated as one of divine figures who is said to have assisted Indra in killing Vṛtrāsura.[2] In the Brāhmaṇa literature Viṣṇu is prominent for being the symbol of sacrificial worship (*yajña*).[3]

The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* identifies Viṣṇu Nārāyaṇa, which refers to a 'supremely valiant man'.[4] The term Viṣṇu suggests the sense of the energy from which the universe is.

Viṣṇu is thereby entrusted with preservation of the world. He is represented to have duly discharged his duties by his various incarnations (*avatara*).[5] The *Manusamhitā* derives Nārāyaṇa as the foremost among men who leads the mobility of beings originated out of water.[6]

In the Purāṇas, Nārāyaṇa has been regarded as the 'supremely valiant man' prominent in yoga. He is said to have created Urvaśī from a flower on his thigh by dint of his *yoga* power in order to put Indra into shame.[7]

The *Kaṭhopaniṣad* refers to the entrance into the abode of Viṣṇu, Viṣṇudhāma, as the goal of man's life, where Viṣṇu is regarded as the sustaining force of the universe.[8] The usage of epithets like Kṛṣṇa-Viṣṇu, Nārāyana-Viṣṇu, Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, historically leaves room to explore the nucleus of the tendency of self-dedication in presence of the 'supremely valiant man' with an approach of benignness. Viṣṇu was epitheted as *bhagavān*,[9] he who possesses six kinds of excellence inclusive of omnipotence as mentioned in the later texts like *Maitrī Upaniṣad.* A large number of Upaniṣads of much later origin praise Viṣṇu and his other manifestations like Kṛṣṇa, Rāma, Nṛsiṃha, Vāmana and so on.[10] The tendency of dedication (*bhakti*) towards Nārāyaṇa turned into the distinct cult named *bhakti-yoga* in which the all-immanent omnipotent is always worshipped and praised with an endearing sentiment and faithful submission. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* declares Kṛṣṇa Bhagavān when the *bhakti* became a definite mode of practice as a distinct cult of worship all over India.

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* refers to *pañcavīra* with the prominence of Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa together with Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha.

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* refers to not only Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa with prominence but also ises Viṣṇuvyūha Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. In this connection, the *Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās*[11] mention probably the oldest traditions of Viṣṇu worship with reference to the *Pañcasukha* of the *Ṛgveda* and the Nārāyaṇiya section of the *Mahābhārata.* In this regard, Sudhakara Chattopadhyay throws more light on the historical development of Vaiṣṇavism[12] centreing round Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa of the Sātvata family. According to him, Vāsudeva has been factually a human hero, who was deified and, later on, identified with Viṣṇu and Nārāyaṇa. As a pattern of hero-worship the Vāsudeva cult arose. The said cult took shapes as Sātvata (family cult in which Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa), Pañcarātrika (family cult inclusive of the other members Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, Aniruddha as emanatories of Vāsudeva-

Kṛṣṇa), and Bhāgavata (Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa as Bhagavān). The deification of human Vāsudeva has been explicit in the *Mahābhārata*.[13]

In this connection the Āḷvārs of south India throw a new light.[14] They prefer to *ekānta-bhakti* in resemblance of the Aikāntika cult. The contribution of the Āḷvārs (devout-saints) have come down to us through the Tamil Saṅgama anthology (*Paripāḍal*). The *Paripāḍal* verses composed by the south Indian Āḷvārs describe devotional sentiment with a tone of unconditional submission as and when they are blessed with a spiritual vision of the endearing Lord, Māyon (the hued one).[15] Māyon manifests as Śrīraṅga, Srīmannārāyaṇa who may be identified with dark-hued Viṣṇu or Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa. The incarnated form of Viṣṇu like Narasiṃha, Varāha, Vāmana, Mohinī, have been also identified with Kṛṣṇa,

The lyrics of the Āḷvars numbering twelve lay emphasis upon eternal, pure and unblemished sentiment of human mind submitted, in favour of the endearing who is divine, all immanent omnipotent. Through those devotional songs the devout Āḷvārs attained the spiritual vision. Tirumaṅgai describes his own state of affairs as follows: Womenfolk being adorned with ornaments laugh at me; but no shame, no fear, no courtesy remains with me now. If they become pleased to laugh at me, let them do so. I am totally ignorant of them. I do not like to win over my endearing *Nīlamaṇi*-hued one. I prefer to be in association of Kurugundi instead of a jasmine creeper.

Aillium nan pahal iruṇde |
ęsilum eshuh enḍu iḷḷeyār |
Nallar abar tiram nām ariyom |
nāṇ maḍam accam namakku ingu ille |
Vallan shonlli mahiḷ-varelum |
mā maṇi vaṇṇarai nām marvom |
Kollai vaḷar iḷam mullai pulhu |
Kuruṅggaḍikke ennai uyttiḍumin ||[16] (IV.1793)

The Āḷvārs flourished in the early centuries of the Christian era when the *bhakti* mode in worship developed much. Twelve Āḷvārs whose contributions have come down to us are enumerated below.

1. Periy-āḷvār (Santa Viṣṇucitta)
   Tirumoḷi (Śrīsūkti) 473 verses.
2. Āṇṇāl (Śrīgodā)

(*i*) *Tiruppāvai* (Prabandha) 30 verses.
(*ii*) *Nacciyār Tirumoḷi* (Devīśrīsūkti) 143 verses

3. Kulaśekhar-āḷvār (Santa Kulaśekhara)
   Perumāl Tirumoḷi (Śrīsūkti) 105 verses.
4. Tirumaḷiśai-āḷvār (S. Bhaktisāra)
   (*i*) *Tiruccanda Viruttam* 120 verses.
   (*ii*) *Nanmukam tiruantaḍi* 16 verses.
   deal with *paratattva.*
5. Tondar-adippodi āḷvār (S. Bhaktānghri-reṇu)
   Tirumālai (Śrīmālā) 45 verses.
   Tiruppalli-yelucci (prabandhanagīta) in praise of Śrīraṅganātha 10 verses.
6. Tiruppan-āḷvar (S. Pāṇa Munivāhana)
   Amalam ādi pirān 10 verses.
7. Madhurkavi-āḷvār (S. Madhurakavi)
   Kaṇṇi nuṇ Shiruttāmbu verses.
8. Tirumangai. āḷvār (S. Śrīparakāla)
   (*i*) *Periy-tirumoḷi* (Bṛhat-Śrīsūkti) 1048 verses.
   (*ii*) *Tirukkurutaṇḍakam* 20 verses.
   (*iii*) *Tireneḍuntaṇḍakam* 30 verses.
   (*iv*) *Tiru eḷukurrirukkai* 1 verse.
   (*v*) *Shiriyamaṇḍala* 40 verses.
   (*vi*) *Periy-madala* 78 verses.
9. Paygai-āḷvār.
10. Bhuatt-āḷvār.
11. Namm-āḷvār.
12. Pey-āḷvār.

The contents of the compositions made by the Āḷvārs bear some common characteristics such as:

(*i*) Sentimental appeal which wins the heart of a devotee by depicting their personal experience with a spiritual vision.

(*ii*) Meaningful submission to attain a blissful state in experience.

(*iii*) Intention of devoting their own life (till death comes) for the cause of service of Him, who is the all-immanent and omnipotent.

(*iv*) Dāsānudāsabhāva—spirit of being at the service by all possible means so that no reservation for ego grows.

(*v*) Less attempt for being intellectual or logistic in attainment or realisation.

(*vi*) No exercise of strenuous esoteric practices but full care and attention for *brahmacarya*. An Āḷvār therefore feels proud to identify himself as an experienced capable servant to please his 'endearing lord' with peerless love, sincere devotion and inexplicable faithfulness.

In the development of Vaiṣṇavism in India the contribution of Āḷvārs refer to '*dāsa-bhakti*' like Garuḍa to Visnu and Hanumān to Srī Rāmacandra. Periy-āḷvār seeks the blessings from Srī Rāmacandra so that he may endeavour to serve as best as Hanumān did when Sītādevī was in the Aśoka garden. The distinction of *dāsa-bhakti* from *ahaitukī preman* may be appreciated when Āṇḍāḷ dedicates herself with total submission to Śrīraṅga, the 'Endearing Lord'. Tirumalsai-Āḷvār (Sant Bhaktisāra) sings.

> *Iyakku arād pal pirappil ennai mārri inru vandu* /
> *Uyak koḷ meh vaṇṇan maṇṇi ennilay tannuḷe* /
> *Mayakkinān tan mannu shodi ādlal en āvi tān* /
> *Iyakku elām aruttu arād inpa viḍu peirrade* //
>
> "Since many births the flow of birth never stops; now that flow has been ceased. The Dark-cloud hued now stands in my presence to make me off from that continuous flow; the eternal light has made me effulgent so that it is a pleasure to obtain liberation being separated from the course of that continuity (of life and death)."

REFERENCES

[1] *Divya Prabandha*, vol. III, verse 956, published with Hindi translation, by Pt. Shrinivas Raghavan.

[2] Viṣṇu is a solar-god in the *Ṛgveda*. In the Buddhist literature Veṇhu is Viṣṇu. The Vṛtra story has been developed in the Purāṇic literature.

[3] *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* I.1.

[4] *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* XIII.3.4.1; VIII. 6.1.1., II.12.

[5] *Yasmādviśvamidaṃ sarvaṃ tasya śaktyā mahātmanaḥ* /
Tasmādevocyate Viṣṇurvisadhatoḥ praveśanāt //

[6] *Āpo nārā iti proktā āpo vai narasunavaḥ* /
Ta yadasyayanam pūrvaṃ tena nārāyaṇa smṛta //

[7] *Viṣṇuparāṇa*

[8] *Kaṭhā Upaniṣad* I.39.

[9] *Aiśvaryasya samagrasyavīryasya yaśasaḥ śriyaḥ* /
Jñānavairāgyayoścaiva ṣaṇṇāṃ bhaga itīṅganā //
Jñāna śakti balaiśvarya vīrya tejansyaśesataḥ /
Bhagavacchabdavācyāni vinā heyairguṇadibhiḥ // (*Nirukta*, 20)

Also,

Bhagavān paramātmeti procyate'ṣṭṅgayogibhiḥ |
Brahmetyupanisannistairjñānam ca jñānayagibhi || (*Skandapurāṇam*)
Vadanti tat tattvavidstattvaṃ yajjñānamadvayam |
Brahmeti paramātmeti bhagavāniti śabdyate || (*Śrīmadbhāgavata*, p. 1.2.11)

In respect of Vāsudeva-*bhagavān* the *Nyāyavivaraṇa* cites:

Pūrṇānandaḥ pūrṇabhuk pūrṇakartā
Pūrṇajñānaḥ pūrṇabhāh pūrṇarktiḥ |
Pūrṇaiśvaryād bhagavān Vāsudevo
Viruddhaśaktirna ca doṣaspragīśaḥ ||

Upaniṣads refer to contrary attributes:

Aṇoraṇiyān mahato mahīyān (*Kaṭha Up*. 1.2.20)
Āsino dure vrajati śayāno yati sarvataḥ (*Kaṭha Up*. 1.2.21)
Tadeti tannaijati tad dūre tadvantike (*Īśā Up*. 5)
Turīyamaturīyam-ātmānamamātmānam-ugramanugram—
viramavīram mahāntamamahāntaṃ viṣṇumaviṣṇum
jvalantamajvalantaṃ sarvatomukhamasarvatomukham
(*Nṛsiṇhottaratāpanīya Up*, 6).

[10] (*i*) *Avyaktopaniṣad* (*Avyaktanṛsiṃha up*.), (*ii*) *Garuḍa up*, (*iii*) *Kali-santaraṇa up*, (*iv*) *Gopāla-tāpanī up*, (*v*) *Tārāsāra up*, (*vi*) *Kṛṣṇa up*, (*vii*) *Gopālotharatāpanī up*, (*viii*) *Dattātreya up*, (*ix*) *Tripāda vibhuti-māhānārāyaṇa up*, (*x*) *Nārāyaṇa up*, (*xi*) *Nṛsiṃhatāpanī up*, (*xii*) *Nṛsiṃhottara-tāpinī up*. (*xiii*) *Rāmātāpanī up*, (*xiv*) *Rāmottaratāpanī up*, (*xv*) *Rāmarahasya up*, (*xvi*) *Vāsudeva up*, (*xvii*) *Maitrī upaniṣad*.

[11] (*i*) *Īśvara Saṃhitā*, (*ii*) *Śrī-Praśna Saṃaitā*, (*iii*) *Nārada Pāñcarātra*.

[12] Sudhakara Chattopadhyaya, *Evolution of Hindu Sects*, pp. 24ff.

[13] *Vāsudevo'canīyo vaḥ sarvalokamahesvaraḥ |*
Tathā manuṣyo'yamiti kadācit suraṣattamāḥ ||
Navajñeyo mahāviryaḥ saṅkhacakragadādharaḥ ||
(*Mahābhārata*, Bhīṣma Parvan, p. 66.13-14)

[14] K.C. Varadachari, *The Āḷvārs of South India*. "The Hymns of the Āḷvārs," J.S.M. Hooper in *History of the Indian Philosophy*, ed., S.N. Dasgupta.

[15] *Vaiṣṇava Literature*, II; Prema Nandakumar, *Cultural Heritage of India*, vol. V, pp. 118ff.

[16] *Divya Prabandha*, vol. IV.

17

Bhaktism in Medieval Tamilnad

N. SUBRAHMANIAN

Evolving man had wanted both a protection from fear and a haven of hope to help him move forward into an unfettered future. This twin need had determined his religion and concept of God in the field of spirit, as also his discoveries and inventions in the field of matter. Fear and not love, as anthropologists will attest, was the starting point of primitive man's religion. The role of the magician-priest in ancient religion was also to instil fear of the unknown among his constituents and hope of reward if that unknown were sufficiently and suitably requited. In India when Vedic sacrificial magic had reached its manifest limits and when enquiries about the imagined unknown could yield no positive answers in the Upaniṣadic discourses, man wanted to go back to the old tactics of coaxing by love and pacifying by yielding. A combination of love and yielding is known by the generic name *bhakti*'. Though it is a combination, the outer coat is love leading to ecstasy and the inner core fear leading to surrender. The Vedic sacrificial religion was a contractual religion in which rewards were exchanged by *ṛṣis* and *devas*; each periodically getting what he wanted from the other, and each occasionally threatening to withhold the essential needs of the other. Thus it was contractual. The *bhakti* scheme was and could be described as, feudal wherein it is not a case of two equal contracting parties being contemplated, but two unequal parties—the deity and the devotee, the former of which provides protection (*abhaya*) for surrender (*prapatti*) received from the latter.

When the *bhakti* scheme came in, the deity had been assumed as of immeasurably superior status—the universal, the eternal, the creating sustaining destroying force, the all-fearful and the all merciful and so on, with all humanly imaginable qualities; and the devotee as a humble spark in the spectrum of life and death, entirely at the mercy of the deity. This notion naturally has a stronger component of fear than of love; a special mixture of the two in a certain proportion can lead to hysterics called 'ecstasy' and other mystic phenomena.

While *bhakti*, in the Hindu context, can be thought of as an integral and natural development, it can also be imagined to be an answer or the Buddha's religion of 'ethics in morality'. Neither Vedic rituals nor the intellectual quests of the Upaniṣads could provide a sufficient answer to the challenge of the Buddha's insistence on 'goodness' rather than on 'piety'. The Hindu reaction was to create an extra dose of piety and equate it with goodness and subsume all ideas of ethics in the grace of God and the fate of man. That way also, it may be imagined, *bhaktism* came in and became relevant and useful. *Bhakti* has other obvious advantages over the complicated ritualism of the sacrifices, and over the pain inherent in penances and other austerities. *Bhakti* is simple, easily given, open to all and does not involve any extra or special exertion. The occasions of feeding the deity can be celebrated as gay festivals for the ordinary human beings. Thus it comes to pass that the popularity of *bhakti* surpassed the efficacy of the sacrifice, the curiosity of the Upaniṣadic knowledge seeker or the consequences of penance. The major element of *bhakti* from the devotee's point of view was surely surrender to the lord, and it did not always involve this ritual of a penitence as required in Christianity. The grace of God will look after the rest. Of course there are nuances in the theory of *bhakti*, but generally speaking it is supposed to be a characteristic of God to overlook every other failing of the devotee provided he totally and finally surrendered to His will.

This doctrine in its broad but unmistakable outline was traced, one would think, for the first time in the *Bhagavad-Gītā:* the element of *bhakti* in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* seems to have been provided sharper edges retrospectively in the reverse light of the *Gītā*. Now the *Gītā*, therefore, can be taken to be the most important starting point in the evolution of the Hindu religion, especially for the reason that after it was preached, *bhakti* has dominated Hinduism, in spite of occasional and excessive intellectualism as can be seen, e.g., in Śaṅkara.

In the Tamil country, in the Śaṅgam age, the tradition of *bhakti* to Śiva, Viṣṇu, Balarāma, Murugan and many other minor deities including the Goddess of learning and Indra, the celestial king and even the Moon God—apart from a number of demons—became a way of life which did not too much interfere with the broad secularity of their public or private life. Whatever be the offering to the deity (whether it be rice or mutton), whatever be the mode of worship i.e. whether by devil-dancing or by Vedic chanting, whether it was associated with demons resident in hills, trees and rivers, *bhakti* was *bhakti*. The more primitive and perhaps on that account more genuine *bhakti* was described as being superior to the sophisticated Vedic worship-forms favoured by the brāhamṇas; this is seen in the Kammappa Nayarar Purāṇa of the *Periya Purāṇam* of Śekkilār. In the *Tirumuṅgaruppāḍai*, *Paripādal* and in the many prefatory verses prefixed to the Śaṅgam anthologies, one sees the nucleus of Tamil *bhakti* literature. But it was not very much in the foreground. *Bhakti* then had not ousted any legitimate secular concern of man from the scheme of human things. But after that age had come to a close and after the Kaḷabhra period also had passed, the true *bhakti* age in the history of the Tamils began, and it lasted from the sixth century AD to the end of the Vijayanagara period and has survived that period too, but in a sporadic and repetitive way.

This period of *bhakti* can be further analysed into two broadly recognisable divisions. The earlier phase was one of a number of saintly and pious persons who, endowed with poetical and musical talents, fitted well with the equipment needed to move to common man to religious fervour (in which the pleasures of relief from intellectual exertion were perhaps even greater than the ecstasies of God-realisation) wandered about the country, visited temple after temple and sang hymns of praise of deities presiding there and drew a vast following which slowly became God-conscious in their own way. The miracles attributed to these saints should have gone a long way to impress the multitude with the spiritual efficacy of *bhakti*.

These men belonged either to the Vaiṣṇavite sect or to the Śaivite. The former were not saddled with as many responsibilities as the latter for they could content themselves with singing the praises of their chosen lord, mostly Śrī Raṅganātha in Śrīraṅgam, or any version of Viṣṇu or his *avatāras* anywhere but the Śaivites had to tackle many problems simultaneously.

The Śaivism which has been prevalent in the Tamil country before the advent of the Nāyanmārs was a strange and repulsive mixture of Pāśupataism, Kālāmukhaism etc. some of which indulged in primitive orgies like using human skulls as begging bowls etc. This brand of Śaivism had somehow to be stopped for it was easily becoming a target of Buddhist and Jain sarcasm and criticism. That is why they adopted the creed of non-violence more seriously and conceived of Śiva as the embodiment of love and grace; the newly emerging Śaivism had to adopt vegetarianism in an extreme form. This effort of reforming Śaivism by removing the more primitive elements from it was the first task of the apostles of the new Śaivism. Their second step was to attack Buddhism and Jainism on their home ground and accuse the former of atheism and the latter of ineffective magic and worshipping of false gods; this was facilitated by their giving up to a large extent many of their earlier socio-religious practices; the third task commenced after they had assured themselves of the victory of reformed Hinduism over the heretical religions. They also fought a religious civil war with Vaiṣṇavism which was also becoming a driving force in the Tamil country from about the sixth century AD. In fact, a study of the Śaivite religious hymns and their hagiology as narrated in the *Periya Purāṇam* of Sekkiḷār, shows how the Śaivites launched all the assault more or less from the same time; but we get no account of how the others reacted to these attacks. The Buddhists, Jains and the Vaiṣṇavites have no accounts of serious anti-Śaivite activity. They seem to have been mostly on the defensive, except for Vaiṣṇavism which just contented itself with denying the claims of the Saivites of the supremacy of Śiva. In the earlier stages it appears as if the Vaiṣṇava hymnists were accommodative and in a mood to reconcile the conflicting claims of the worshippers of Śiva and of Nārāyana by deliberately putting forth the Hari-Hara cult and a theory of the ultimate equation of Śiva with Nārāyaṇa. This happened in the days of the first three Āḷvārs of the Vaiṣṇava canon, known in Tamil as the *mudal* Āḷvārs (the Pey, Bhudam and Poygai Āḷvārs). The exclusivism of the Śaivites, however, seems to have driven the Vaiṣṇavas deep into the opposite camp and made them fiercely anti-Śaivite. It seems to be the fate of theism to be engaged all the time either in attacking on an equally popular theism or to be constantly combating claims of competing deities within the four walls of the same brand of religious system. Neither the Śaivites nor the Vaiṣṇavites ever denied the Vedas or the supremacy of the brāhmaṇas in the social order; so their membership in the Hindu fold was as usual. The schisms may be attributed to the veritable consequences of the earlier politheism. But these sects did not coexist peacefully as is claimed usually by many historians of Indian culture; they were bitterly hostile to each other.

The *bhakti* movement in Tamilnad was spearheaded by a group of Vaiṣṇava saints called Āḷvārs (those who dive deep in the ocean of the Lord's merciful greatness) and group of Śaiva saints called Nāyanmārs (the leaders in religious thought and in the worship of the Lord). For the Vaiṣṇavas the Lord is Nārāyaṇa and to the Śaivas Śiva. It is difficult to assess the relative strength of the popular following in the case of these sects; it may be stated that with earlier stages of this movement, Śaivism was dominant, while in the later stages Vaiṣṇavism took over. The extraordinary popularity of Vaiṣṇavism was not with Āḷvārs but with Rāmānuja of the twelfth century AD while Śaivism had achieved most of its objectives during the period between Sambandar and Manikkavacagar (between seventh and ninth-tenth century AD). The triumph of Vaiṣṇavism was achieved mostly by the philosophers, Rāmānuja and his successors, as also by the illustrious commentators on the Āḷvār hymns. The *Thevaram* hymns of the Nāyanmārs had no such commentators and there was really no Śaivite religious tradition which built up a philosophical school entirely or at least largely based on Thevaram theology. The later Śaivite tradition was based on the Śaiva Siddhānta metaphysics for which the basic text was *Śivajñānabodham* of Meykandar. In the case of the Vaiṣṇavas, however, though Rāmānuja commented only on the *Brahma Sūtras*, he and his followers considered the hymns of the Āḷvārs as no less sacred than the Vedas; and the Tenkalai sect among the Śrī-Vaiṣṇavas held the Āḷvār hymns as the real basis of their faith. So Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism had different paths of evolution, though broadly speaking, they were both *bhakti* paths.

It is to be noted that in the Tamil country three phenomena of a related nature occurred more or less during the same period of time. In the *bhakti* movement had to be sustained not only a number of saintly persons endowed with the gift of song and verse going about creating piety among the laity, but also a number of sacred shrines in which to worship the preferred gods and also the authoritative and sacred texts needed to guide the modes of worship and to provide the techniques of temple construction and icon-making: in short the simultaneous occurrence of a number of sacred hymnists, sacred shrines and sacred guiding texts created the objective conditions of the *bhakti* movement. It would be historically correct to say that the *bhakti* movement was made possible by the accidental occurrence of these three phenomena at the same time. That is how the nucleus of most of the great temples of Tamil land came to be built then, that is during the Pallava period; its maturity is seen during the Coḷa and Pāṇḍya periods and embellishing culmination during the Vijayanagara period.

The phenomenal growth of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism in the Tamil country should not be supposed to have completely done away with Buddhism and Jainism here. Many famous Tamil literary pieces were created by the Buddhists and Jains, like *Jīvakacintāmaṇi*, *Viraśoḷīyam*, etc., and these seem to have had considerable influence not only on the students of literature but even on the common people. The story of the circumstances under which the *Periyā Purāṇam* was written, as tradition has it, indicates the Coḷa king's anxiety to stop the spreading influence of Jainism made him encourage Śekkiḷār in the composition of the account of the lives of the Nāyanmārs. Buddhism did not die out till the days of Vīrarājendra, while Jainism continued to flourish in important pockets of Tamilnad. So it is an exaggeration when it is said that Buddhism and Jainism were wiped out from the Tamil country by the exertions of the Śaivites and Vaiṣṇavites.

Apart from these developments there was a third religious force represented by the Siddhas becoming a power to be reckoned with especially in the field of religio-mystic thought. Tirumular the most important name in this tradition wrote the *Tirumandiram* where he expounded the principle and precepts of Śaiva mysticism. It is interesting to note that practically all the Siddhas were Śaivite mystics, i.e. from Tirumular to Rāmaliṅga Swamy who lived in the nineteenth century. These Siddhas were miracle-men who believed in the possibility of the monadic transformation of the body. Among the Vaiṣṇavas, some of the Āḷvars like Nammāḷvār were mystics, but the Saivite mystic tradition is more predominant in the south. They counted among their illustrious saints the great renouncer Pattinattar. An extreme desire of physical immortality combined with serious asceticism was the hallmark of this group of religious men. In their own way they spread a form of god-experience among the multitude.

One final world has to be said about the *bhakti* movement. In theory as well as in fact the *bhakti* way is open to all irrespective of caste, creed and sex. But the Hindu social organisation is thrown into the *varṇāśrama* framework which is based on a philosophy of inequality. At the same time it was also a fact that the unequal and hierarchic society did not object to *bhakti* which preached the right of all equally to approach God through the path of devotion and that of equality in social context. This contradiction cannot be overlooked. It is a question how these two could coalesce and what effect *bhakti* had on the social organisation. The simple and suitable answer is that *bhakti* was not concerned with the social relations among men but dealt only with God-Man relation as all religions do. It laid down the principle of equality among all persons in the presence of God and of the social respectability of pious persons even belonging to the lower castes. In this way its exponents—barring the more radicals—were able to avoid the essential an achronism between the traditional Hindu social philosophy and *bhakti* egalitarianism.

18

A Note on the Bhakti Movement in Tamilnad

R. MEENA

The *bhakti* movement in Tamilnad, launched especially by the Vaiṣṇavas and the Śaivas, had initially two goals before itself—to exterminate the supposed heretical systems like Buddhism and Jainism and to reform the orthodox sects by a kind of purging the forces of ritualism, external formalities, vulgar and cruel practices and the like. These two purposes were served to a great extent, not so much by scriptural interpretations, but by the active efforts of a number of devoted saints, belonging to both the camps, whose messages were spread far and wide during the period between the sixth and tenth centuries of the Christian era—a period during which the later Pallava kings ruled from Kāñchi and the Pāṇḍyas of the Kadungon family reigned from Madurai.

The period between the fourth and sixth centuries AD, which marked the end of the Saṅgam age, was significant in the history of Tamilnad, because it offered the prototype of all the subsequent and successive periods of Tamil history in regard to certain basic characteristics, till the advent of the British rule. In the field of religion there was a marked contrast between the ideas of the Saṅgama age and those of the subsequent periods. While in the Saṅgama age, which was characterised by a spirit of toleration, religion was the means to an end, in the subsequent periods it came to be regarded as an end in itself, the prime concern of society. Thus the period between *c.* AD 600 and 1000 became ideally suited for a struggle of survival between Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism on the one hand and between these sects and Buddhism and Jainism on the other.

This did not however mean a forcible extermination of the rival creeds. It was a fight on ideological ground in which the Vaiṣṇavas and the Śaivas banked on the concept of *bhakti* for extending their sphere of influence. But *bhakti* was not a new-fangled idea. It was quite known to the devotees of the Saṅgam age when the question of religious rivalry did not arise, and no new interpretation of it was needed to suit the changing demands of time and to sharpen the denominational and sectarian fervours in all religious camps.

From an historical point of view, the *bhakti* mode of worship was initiated by the teachings of the *Bhagavadgītā* in the pan-Indian context. During the Kaḷabhra interregnum when the Imperial Guptas were ruling in Magadha, there was the introduction of classical Hinduism spreading itself through Sanskrit and exerting great influence all over India. The south could not avoid this influence. Tamilnad emerged from the Kaḷabhra period with the torch of *bhakti* held aloft and burning into two flames—Śaivite and Vaiṣṇavite *bhaktism*. But at the same time it has to be admitted that in a subsequent period when the fire of *bhakti* was waning in the north and was going to be nearly extinguished, it was the flames from the south that revitalized it.

Among the two aspects of the Hindu *bhakti* movement in Tamilnad there were points of agreement as well as of discord. The Śaivite bhaktism became prominent in the seventh century with the appearance on the scene of Sambandar and Appar, the first two of the four Śaiva Samayācāryas. It was manifest even earlier when Nakkirar was writing his *Thirumurugattruppadai* and Karaikkal Ammai was singing the *Thiruvalangattu*. But the effective movement is rightly dated from the early seventh century AD. This holds good generally speaking for Vaiṣṇavism also. Of the twelve Āḷvārs, except the first three who formed a separate category, the rest belonged to the same period to which the Śaiva Samayācāryas belonged. That is to say, the two main streams of bhaktism were running parallel to each other and were covering the same period of time. The Vaiṣṇavite *bhakti* movement culminated in Rāmānuja's commentary on the *Brahma Sūtras*, well known as the *Śrībhāṣiya* and that the Śaiva bhaktism was consummated by Meykandar's *Śivajñānabodham*, the basic text of the Śaiva Siddhānta philosophy.

The Śaiva *bhakti* movement was initiated and spread by four Samayācāryas and sixty-three Nāyanmārs. Likewise the Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* movement was launched by twelve Āḷvārs. The first three of them—Pey, Budhan and Poggai—were known as Mudal Āḷvārs and they represented an earlier tradition. Their outlook differed from the rest, especially from that of Nammāḷvār, Periyāḷvār and Thirumangaiāḷvār. The Mudal Āḷvārs praised both Viṣṇu and Śiva at the same time and viewed the Almighty in Harihara form.

Their poems exhibited no sectarian antagonism, though a preference to Viṣṇu was obvious. On close scrutiny of the devotional literature of the Śaivas and the Vaiṣṇavas it transpires that the Śaivas were definitely more aggressive and outspokenly hostile towards their rival creeds. In course of time both the streams received their respective form and distinctiveness in the hands of eminent scholars, commentators and devotees.

The Śaiva Siddhānta school, as we have seen above, was the logical culmination of the Śaiva *bhakti* movement initiated by the Samayācāryas and Nāyanmārs. The followers of this system remained as a single body for a long time avoiding all sorts of schisms. But this did not hold good in the case of the Vaiṣṇavas. After Ramanuja, Śrī-Vaiṣṇavism split into two minor denominations, which were intramural, but keenly critical of each other. These groups were known as Ṭenkalai and Vaḍakalai, meaning the southern and the northern, the former representing a liberal and the latter a conservative tradition. Apart from differences in regard to the doctrinal interpretations, these two groups maintained social differences as well. This difference went even to the extent of preventing intermarriage between them.

Some other historical considerations may also be taken into account in the understanding of the nature of *bhakti* movement in this part of the country. From the very beginning the Vaiṣṇava bhaktism was democratic in character and therefore it was able to assemble under its banner persons belonging to different communities, castes, classes and groups. The emergence of Śaṅkara in the ninth century AD was a turning point in the social evolution of Hinduism. His subtle analysis and sophisticated interpretation of the philosophical intricacies had a tremendous influence upon the streams of Indian thought, but so far as his social views were concerned his sole commitment was to Manu. It was to a certain extent that owing to the influence of his social views a considerable section of the orthodox brāhmaṇas was sliced off into a class that came to be known as Smārtas. The leftovers among the brāhmaṇas found their way in Vaiṣṇavism. Śaivism *per se* was adopted only by a large non-brāhmaṇa following with a small percentage of exclusively Śaivite Smārta brāhmaṇas.

Equality as a religious principle was extended to the social sphere by the example of Rāmānuja, but there were problems as well. The Vaḍakalai, which was a reaction to the liberalism of the

Ṭenkalai, consolidated Vaiṣṇavite orthodoxy and this served to widen the difference between the two camps. The question of democratisation did not probably arise in the case of the Śavites. They did not try to bring different communities into one fold. They all remained communally distinct, though the same faith bound them together. Apart from these differences there were Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava conflicts as well, which became more marked after the fall of the Vijayanagara empire. Still, both these streams of *bhakti* had similar objective and operational pattern. Both these streams had derived their main impulses from the earlier devotional hymns of the unsophisticated and unprejudiced saints. Both in the course of their evolution were doctrine-oriented, giving rise to the development of more than one creed followed by sectarian votaries. And lastly, both these streams had to pass through varied social realities as a consequence of which they could not avoid certain contradictions caused by forces which were not originally inherent in them.

19

The Bhakti Movement in Kerala

K.K. KUSUMAN

There were two waves of *bhakti* movement in Kerala, one from seventh to ninth century, directed against Jainism and Buddhism and the second from fifteenth to seventeenth century for relieving Hindu religion from the fissiparous tendencies and the consequent general decay and deterioration into which that religion had fallen. In the first instance, Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism had joined hands to wipe of Jain and Buddhist influence, but during the second movement it was Vaiṣṇavism that took the lead for inner purification.

By the beginning of the twelfth century Coḷa threat to Kerala was over and the people, on the whole, lived in splendour and prosperity thanks to the immense economic fortune brought out by the virulent commercial activities with the outside world.[1] This state of affair is unmistakably delineated in the vernacular literatures like *Unniyachi charitam*, *Unnichirutevi charitam* and *Ananthapura Varnana.* Prominent native princes of the time were in the habit of encouraging and honouring pundits and litterateurs and in this connection special reference might be made to the princes of Travancore, Cochin, Calicut and Cannanore.[2] The ruler of Calicut held annual assemblies of literary luminaries and pundits who were properly rewarded. This royal incentive and patronage naturally favoured the study of Vedic literatures further and there was an over all conscientious effort to glorify Hindu *dharma.* Consequently there was a spurt of literature in many a branch of knowledge like Mīmāṁṣā, Vedānta, grammar, logic, astrology and sculpture. Besides in places like Vaikom, Ravipuram, Irinjalakuda and Trikkanamatilakam, then emerged notable brahmin settlements. This tendency had its reflection on temples; the number of abode of worship and the embellishments attached to festivals also evinced symptoms of progress and prosperity.

Simultaneous with this, one could also notice the tendency of a section of people for pleasure-seeking and amorous life—the inevitable result of economic prosperity. It is this tendency that converted the *devadāsis* or dancing girls of temples into call girls. Similarly, the system of the eldest son in a brahmin family alone marrying from the same caste and the younger sons entering into *sambandham* with the Nair women, taking no responsibility to the offsprings born of such connections, created a social structure, where life was wedded to licentiousness and ephemeral pleasures. The literature of the time is reflective of this feature; for one can see a fairly long list of *devadāsīs* who were characters in such works. The *bhakti* movement was a reaction against this fast declining socio-cultural and religious situation of the period ranging from fifteenth to seventeenth centuries.

It all started with the *Krishnagadha* of poet Cherusseri (*c.* 1427-1500) who was a protege of Udaya Varman, ruler of Cannanore. The poet wanted this work to be devotionally sung by all, especially women; attainment of *mokṣa* or salvation was the motive of singing *Krishnagadha.* He was of firm belief that by compiling the work he found a place in the other world i.e., in the world of Lord Viṣṇu. The *bhakti* movement received substantial contribution from Thunchathu Ramanujan Ezhuthachan (*c.* 1495-1575) who really made the Keralites theists, while Charusseri could only lead the peoples line of thinking towards *bhakti.*[3] Though a Vaiṣṇavite, Ezhuthachan never considered Viṣṇu and Śiva as two entities and he categorically stated that it was *ajñāna* or ignorace that propelled people to consider them as two separate gods. To get relieved from the hallucination of this material world the only channel is *bhakti* —so stated Ezhuthachan. While Manu suggests attainment of *sattva guṇa* birth in brahmin caste etc., as preconditions for attaining *mukti*, Ezhuthachan indirectly repudiated this cumbersome method by offering to people of all castes the meticulous observance of *bhakti* and thereby attainment of *mukti* in this life time itself. He authored many a work inculcating *bhakti* among the people of Kerala. Among such works *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇam, Uthararāmāyaṇam, Mahābhāratam, Devīmāhātmyam,* have been indisputably attributed to him. Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyar, was of firm opinion that the authoriship of *Harināmakīrtanam, Kaivelyanavanītam, Cintāratnam, Brahmāṇḍapurāṇam Rāmāyaṇam Irupathinaluvritham* and *Kerala Nāṭakam* might be attributed to Ezhuthachan only after close scrutiny.[4] However, those works, whose authorship have been undoubtedly attributed to him by all, are enough to immortalise him among the Keralites. He made the people conscious of the ephemeral nature of sensuous pleasures; the perpetual character of spiritualism alone was the ultimate solution to the unending problems and sorrows of human life. Prof. K.V. Krishna Ayyar considers Ezhuthachan on a par with the other two *mahātmās* of Kerala, viz., Śaṅkarācharyar and Srī Nāryāṇa Guru and these three, according to him, have really uplifted the people of Kerala at different intervals of time.[5]

Another notable Viṣṇu devotee of the medieval period was Melpathoor Nārāyaṇa Bhattatiri, (AD 1559-1620). Born in a Namboodiri family called Melpathoor in the erstwhile native state of Cochin, he mastered the Vedas, logic, grammar etc., at a very early age. Subsequently he got married and became a victim to gout. Since the treatment went ineffective, as a final resort, he bestowed his faith in Guruvayoorappan, the presiding deity at Guruvayoor.[6] Kṛṣṇa, in his child-form, is worshipped here and Bhattatiri also spent his days in the temple invoking Lord Kṛṣṇa. He summarised a section of the *Bhāgavata* into a *daśaka* and submitted it to the Lord with a prayer to relieve him from the disease. Thus, finally, he completed the *Bhāgavata* and authored a new work *Nārāyaṇiyam*.[7] It is said, with the completion of *Nārāyaṇīyam* he got cured from gout. It is also said that he had the realisation of Guruvayoorappan while he wrote the 100th *śloka*.

Guruvayoor at present is the most crowded temple of Kerala; devotees from far and wide reach here for a *darśan* of Guruvayoorappan, who, according to believers, never disappoint *bhaktas*. But this temple had not attained so much fame in the medieval period; it is *Nārāyaṇiyam* and Nārāyaṇa Bhattatiri that brought Guruvayoorappan to the notice of the people. Deva Nārāyanan, the ruler of the petty chiefdom of Ambalapuzha invited Bhattatiri, and at the request of the former he compiled *Prakriyā Sarvasvam*, a grammatical work. Bý this work he won the regard of Yajñanārāyaṇa Dikṣitar of Thanjavur and Bhattoji Dikṣitar, the author of *Siddhānta Kaumudī*.

The *Nārāyaṇiyam* consists of 1006 *ślokas* and they are in the form of direct appealing to the Lord. He establishes the uniqueness of Viṣṇubhakti as means of attaining salvation in the *Kaliyuga*. In the sublime state of Viṣṇubhakti, he even goes to the extent of degrading Lord Śiva a little, nay, this is his attitude towards the other *Devas*, whose inferiority is delineated by him with a certain amount of prejudice. Since *Nārāyaṇīyam* is the summary of the *Bhāgavata*, by reading the former, all the benefit of reading the latter can be attained—so goes the belief of devotees. Bhattatiri confirms in the first *daśaka* itself that Guruvayoorappan is none other than Bhagavān, that is *parabrahma*. It is admitted that Nārāyaṇa Bhattatiri has scored profusely in his attempt to charm the people to the path of *bhakti* in the period of his life time and thereby checked, probably, the ungodly and atheistic life led by them.

Poonthanam Namboodiri (*c.* AD 1547-1640) was yet another poet of the *bhakti* movement. He was a native of Malappuram in Malabar. Even after a long period of nuptial life he had no issues. Poonthanam, it is said, finally prostrated before Guruvayoorappan and lived there chanting and singing the glories of the Lord. Thanks to the grace of Guruvayoorappan his wife conceived and she gave birth to a male child. The maiden rice-feeding ceremony to the child was arranged in his house but a few minutes before the stipulated time the child died. To get back the life of the child he once again moved to Guruvayoor. He read *Sandanagopālam* story and wrote it in Malayalam. Finally, Unnikrishnan (Young Kṛṣṇa), the presiding deity generated a profound feeling to the effect that so long as the former lived in his mind why should he try for other issues? Thus Poonthanam got rid of the grief and started composing *stotras* and other devotional works; he made it a point to conduct *bhajan* on all mondays at Guruvayoor. He also visited other temples and soberly advised the people to sing the virtues of the God.

The chief works of Poonthanam, which are really of immeasurable value to the growth of *bhakti* movement, are *Santhānagopālam*, *Jñānappana* and *Śrikṛṣṇakarṇāmṛtam*. Besides, *Nārāyaṇa Stotram Vāsudevastotram*, *Sauristotram*, *Haristotram*, *Jayakṛṣṇastotram*, *Daivamestotram*, *Vāsudeva Balakṛṣṇa-stotram* and *Ānandamṛitham* have also been written by him. In *bhakti* literature his place in Kerala is on a par with Ezhuthachan, whose devotional didactism in *Ādhyātmarāmāyaṇam* can be observed in the *Jñānappana* of Poonthanam. Both unequivocally assure that by chanting *bhajan*, one can attain salvation in the present life itself. The very inception of *Jñānappana* is by making reference to the importance of *nāmajapa;* to make the life fruitful, he says, we should always keep at the tongue-tip, the holy names of God.[8] Again he says nothing is constant in this world; everything is unknown and ordained by God.[9] By chanting, all the *puruṣārthas* can be attained; all can reach Vaikuṇṭha, the abode of Lord Viṣṇu. All are born separately and the same is the case when death occurs; none accompanies us. If so, it is meaningless to quarrel and spoil the time when people meet in this world in between birth and death.[10]

From the brāhmin to Caṇḍāla, irrespective of any differences, all can realise the goal of life by reciting the name of God. This has been recognised by the Vedas,Ācāryas and the *Gītā*. Therefore by chanting the name of God, it may be attempted to attain brahman and thereby seek salvation.[11]

By reciting the name of God poverty can be repelled, and wealth will be accrued, *jīvātmā* and *paramātmā* will unite and *mokṣa* can be attained.[12]

Kuroorammā (AD 1570-1640) was a native of Trichur and she became a widow before any issue was born to her. She spent the rest of her life by praising the virtues of Guruvayoorappan. She was a relative of the famous Vilvamaṅgalam Swamiyar of the medieval period. She spent her life by reciting some of the *stotras* composed by Poonthanam. Renouncing worldly life, she concentrated on *mokṣa* by singing devotional songs.

Vilvamaṅgalam Swamiyar (AD 1575-1660) was a very learned person and a firm devotee of Guruvayoorappan. However, he was in the habit of visiting other Viṣṇu—Śiva temples of Kerala. It is said that by virtue of his *bhakti* he could see the Almighty by his naked eye and he performed *pratiṭiṣṭhā* in many an old temple in Kerala. He was chiefly responsible for the reading of *Gītagovindā* in all Viṣṇu temples.

Thus, for about three centuries the *bhakti* movement in Kerala radiated a new thought-process for the observance of the people. A feeling got currency that self-realisation and salvation could be attained by brahmins, and *avarṇas* alike which in its turn generated self-confidence and self-respect among the latter. But this change did go unaffected to the people below the caste Hindus. The taboo of untouchability and unapproachability attributed to the non-caste Hindus, incapacitated them the right to worship in temples; even in the twentieth century they had to agitate against the obsolete policies of the caste Hindu-dominated government. Thus whatever may be the logical seqence of the *bhakti* movement, it had little relevance and application so far as the above-mentioned people were concerned; to them message of the *bhakti* movement was a gimmic of the learned with little practical importance.

The *bhakti* movement, it must be noted, could not influence even the elite or the literary luminaries of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Venmony school of poets in Malayalam literature unmistakably proves the categorical rejection of the message of the *bhakti* movement. The political works of this school which were fairly popular with the masses, discussed amorus subjects, paying little attention to the call of *bhakti* movement. The observation of Krishna Chaitanya is worth citing to have a grip over the situation:

> The poetry of the Venmani group was the output of a leisured elite, most of whom were Namputiris. Thus there were affinities in this situation with that which produced early *Maṇipravalam* poetry. The fine-spun texture, which was a prime value with this group—although it was managed mostly by simple Malayalam word and not a rich Sanskrit blend—recalled by association the style of early poetry; and not only the style, but a major preoccupation too; and that was sex.[13]

Actually the literature of the time was just reflecting the social culture of time when morality gave way to the sensuality of the privileged upper class people in the society. The poets and society of the time are aptly delineated by Prof. T.K. Ravindran while he observes: "This group of poets had no inhibition about morality in poetry, because, in personal life it was not to be seen anywhere around."[14] If the Venmony school found a receptive readers who could share the views of the former it means the sublime spiritual atmosphere generated by the *bhakti* movement did go unappealing to the masses at large.

REFERENCES

[1] *Kerala Charithram*, Kerala History Association, vol. II, p. 527.
[2] They were petty rulers of Kerala.
[3] Ibid., p. 538.
[4] Ulloor, *Kerala Sāhitya Charitram*, vol. II, p. 550.
[5] *Kerala Charithram*, vol. II., p. 541.
[6] It is situated in the present Trichur district.

[7] Ulloor, op. cit., p. 398.

[8] *Jñānappana*, lines 2-4.

[9] Ibid., lines 5-14.

[10] Ibid., lines 275-84.

[11] Ibid., lines 323-25.

[13] *Śrīkṛṣṇa Karṇāmṛītam* (Mal.), *ślokas* 142-43.

[13] Krishna Chaitanya, *A History of Malayalam Literature*, p. 183.

[14] T.K. Ravindran, *Asan and Social Revolution in Kerala*, p. ii.

20

Medieval Maharashtra and Muslim Saint-Poets

NARAYAN H. KULKARNEE

I

The medieval Maharashtrian society was an interplay of various religious forces, sects and sub-sects. Politically it was ruled by the Hindu dynasty of the Yādavas till it was invaded and the Hindu rule ended by Ālaud-Dīn Khaljī in AD 1239. The Khaljīs renamed their capital Devagiri as Daulatabad. After a brief Khaljī and Tughlaq interlude the Bahamanīs and later their offshoots, viz., Nizāmshahs of Ahmednagar, Adilshahs of Bijapur, Qutab Shahs of Bhajanajar (Hyderabad), Baridshahs of Bidar and Imadshahs of Berar became the Muslim rulers of Maharashtra. With the decline of some of these, Maharashtra became a battleground between the Adilshahs and the Mughal emperors till Shivaji liberated his homeland and declared himself a sovereign in 1674. After his death his son Sambhaji became the *Chatrapati* in 1680 but was captured by the Mughals and cruelly executed in 1689. The next twenty years or so was the period of Maratha War of Independence till his son Shahu I was released in 1707 to become the *Chatrapati.* His chief ministers, the Peshwas, became prominent in the eighteenth century till the British overthrew them in 1818. This political framework and an acquaintance with the prevailing religious sects and sub-sects are essential to the understanding of the nature and importance of the Muslim saint-poets of medieval Maharashtra.

While politically it might be a battleground for a while, religiously Maharashtra was a playground for the interplay of various sects and sub-sects. The Yādava rulers patronised the traditional Vedic religion but its practice in daily life had become much perverted by the monopoly of a few Brāhmaṇa pundits who alone understood the Sanskrit language in which the ancient scriptures and texts were written. They dictated the rules of conduct to the illiterate common man according to their whims and fancies without reference to the ethical and moral values which should guide society. The common man's superstitious beliefs, his ignorance and simplicity, came to be exploited in the name of religion to the advantage of the Brāhmaṇas. Traditional religion had come to mean either theological obscruantism or rampant ritualism and ultimately ritualistic feeling of the Brāhmaṇas. The Brāhmaṇas, instead of being the spiritual leaders of society were engrossed with the gross materialistic good things of life which they closed in the garb of religion. Their pedantic commentaries and abstruse metaphysics could hardly be understood by the common man. The excess to which ritualism had been carried may be inferred from the *Vratakhaṇḍa*, a compilation by Hemādri, a minister of the Yādavas. He prescribed no less than 2,000 rites and ceremonies to be performed in the course of 360 days. Hemādri's *Caturvarga Cintāmaṇi* became not only an authority for religious enlightenment but also an excuse for feeding the Brāhmaṇas in propitiation of particular deities for almost every day of the year. This tragic lack of wisdom amidst apparently great learning has been aptly compared by Saint Jñānadeva with the plumage of a peacock with eyes all over but lacking in essential vision.

If the traditional Vedic religion had become such a parody whom could the common man turn to for his spiritual solace and material rewards as well, if possible but to his village gods? Once again Jñānadeva describes the commoner's pathetic plight graphically. "The villager worships god after god, goes to a *guru* and learns some *mantra* from him, places an image of his choice in a corner at his house, and goes on a pilgrimage to temple after temple. For getting the god at home, he worships the spirits of the dead ancestors with the same devotion as his God, on *ekādasīs* serpents on *nāgpañcamī*, Durgā, on the fourth of the dark fortnight then Navacaṇḍī on another occasion, Bhairava on Sundays, the *liṅga* on Mondays and so on. He worships perpetually without being silent even for a moment, at various shrines, like a courtesan attracting man after man at the entrance to the town; the devotee who thus runs after different gods" says Jñānadeva, "is ignorance incarnate".

But material aspirations were of even greater importance to the common man than spiritual consolation. Certain gods and *gurus* acquired great fame for the fulfilment of the worldly desires of their devotees. Particularly the animistic god Khaṇḍoba of Jejuri (in

Pune district), who gradually came to be converted into a form of Śiva, became extremely popular among the lower classes of Maharashtra as the giver of all that was desired in worldly matters. Many of the devotees in fulfilment of their vows, walked on fire, hung themselves from hooks in front of the image, pierced their thighs with iron pieces and resorted to many similar barbaric practices. Temple prostitution was carried on by *muralis* who were young girls married to Khaṇḍoba and who earned their living by begging and prostitution in Khaṇḍoba's name. Even some married woman abandoned their families in the name of Khaṇḍoba and became *muralis*. It would not be inappropriate to mention here incidentally, that Lord Gaurāṅga Prabhu is said to have visited Jejuri in AD 1513. He was deeply moved by the life of vice led by the *muralis* there and is said to have persuaded one Indirā Devī to abandon her wicked ways.

Was the Nātha Sampradāya an alternative to the pedantic but perverted Vedic religion or the crude animism in the name of religion which took its place? Dr. N.N. Bhattacharyya in an article traces the Nātha sect's origin to tantrism. Be that as it may, the chief protagonists of this all-India sect (of which Gorakṣanātha is generally believed to have been the real founder sometime between the tenth and twelfth centuries) in Maharashtra were Gahininātha, and Nivṛttinātha the elder brother of Jñānadeva. Presumably to popularise the sect in Maharashtra Gahininātha mixed devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa with yogic *sādhanā*, the basic ingredient of this sect. *Haṭhayoga Pradīpikā* is regarded as the Bible of this sect while Gahininātha wrote *Gorakṣa Gītā* for the Maharashtrians Nivṛttinātha was Jñānadeva's *guru* and as such Jñānadeva himself was a Nāthapanthī. Mukunda Rāja, the first great poet of Marathi who compiled *Vivekasindhu* in AD 1185 is also regarded as a Nāthapanthī and to the extent to which he tried to infuse *gurubhakti* (devotion for the *guru*) yogic *sādhanā* and experience with Vedānta, perhaps he might be so regarded. Lakshman Shastri Joshi, however, is of the opinion that *Vivekasindhu* preaches the Vedānta as profounded by Śaṅkarācārya. It has to be observed, however, that the metaphysics and mysticism of Mukundarāja were beyond the common man's grasp. Some of his tenets certainly militated against the needs of the situation, namely, that a mystic should never reveal his inner secret lest the people might misunderstand it, and that contemplation of the *Paramātmān* turns back the devotee from the world and enables him to see the vision of his self. As far as Jñānadeva is concerned, from the description of Śiva and Śakti or the details regarding *kuṇḍalinī* and *yogamāyā* in *Jñāneśvarī*, it could also be deemed to have been influenced by the Nātha philosophy. Jñānadeva's younger sister Muktābai is supposed to be *guru* of the Nāthapanthī Chāṅgdeva. Dr. P.C. Dheve, says however, that Yoginī Muktābai is not the same. It has been said that Baba Ratan Haji, a Muslim, was converted to Nātha Sampradāya and was responsible in turn for converting many of his co-religionists, to this sect. The Nātha Sampradāyīs have written many Marathi works. But despite these, the sect failed to strike deep roots in Maharashtra probably an account of its excessive emphasis of yogic *sādhanā* of a very strict nature. A separate sub-sect called Kānphatas which specialised in piercing the disciples ears and adorning them with crystalline, metallic or ivory adornments came into being. These adornments themselves came to acquire spiritual significance. Dr. Briggs in his work on the sect is of the opinion that the Muslims gave this name as a pejorative. In course of time it must have deteriorated a great deal. For, saint-poet Tukārām of the seventeenth century makes derisive reference to the Kānphatas.

The Mahānubhāva sect, unlike the Nātha Sampradāya is a typically Maharashtrian sect inasmuch as its founder Mahātmā Cakradhara enjoined upon his followers to stay in Maharashtra only. The Mahānubhāvas are also the progenitors of Maratha prose. Cakradhara died in AD 1274 (a year before Jñāndeva's birth) and thus founded his esoteric order in the heydays of the Yādavas. Although by birth a Gujarati (born in AD 1194), Paithan (in Aurangabad district) became his headquarters, so to say. The Mahānubhāvas accept only four incarnations of the Supreme Being and call them Harsa in *Kṛtayuga*, Datta in *Tretāyuga* Śrī Kṛṣṇa in *Dvāpurayuga* and Chakradhara himself in *Kaliyuga*. Their Pañcakṛṣṇas are, apart from Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself, Dattātreya, Chāṅgadeva, Cakrapāṇi, Govindaprabhu and Cakradhara Svāmī himself. The last three are not legendary gods but the *gurus* who were responsible for the founding and expansion of the sect. According to this sect Śrī Kṛṣṇa is not an *avatāra* of Viṣnu but the *Parabrahma* himself. The Dattātreya of this sect is one-faced but four-handed. Image worship is forbidden but all objects touched by or associated with Cakradhara are held in great veneration. Cakradhara forbade his followers from using new clothes; it meant falling prey to temptation. *Saṁnyāsa* had great significance for this sect. All the four *varṇas* and women too could take to *saṁnyāsa*. The conduct enjoined upon the followers was much more negativistic than positive. These negative regulations merely replaced Vedic ritualism with their own and probably stood in the way of the popularisation of the sect. Some scholars are of the opinion that the Mahānubhāvas are opposed to the Vedas; but it would appear that Cakradhara preached within the broad framework of *varnāśrama dharma*. Only violence involved in the animal sacrifice in Vedic rituals is not acceptable to them. Among their venerated texts like *Līlā Caritra*, *Govinda Prabhu Caritra*, *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caritra* etc. compiled by the followers of the sect may be traced the beginnings of Marathi biography. The Mahānubhāva sect in its own way certainly aimed at reforming the traditional Vedic religion as it prevailed in the Yādava days simultaneously with the perversions in the Nātha stream after Gorakṣa Nātha. But the negativistic and overwhelming ritualism and its excessive emphasis on *saṁnyāsa* for self-realization led to its unpopularity. The perversities that entered into this sect later attracted adverse notice from Sant Ekānatha as well as Sant Tukārām (of the Warkari Sampradāya). The Sect stood no chance of popularity when Cakradhara went so far as to dub Viṭṭhala, one of the most popular deities of the common man, as a dacoit. Moreover the Mahānubhāvas were themselves afraid of their herehtical opinions and so locked up their teachings in secret coded scripts known only to themselves.

Yet another attempt to purify and revive the traditional Vedic religion was made by Nṛsimha Sarasvatī in the fourteenth century by founding the cult of Dattātreya. Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī (1378-1438) is himself regarded as the reincarnation of Śrīpada Śrīvallabha of Pithapuram (in Andhra Pradesh). Nṛsiṃha Sarasvati's life, full of miracles (such as curing the Bahamanī king Allauddin by mere blessing) is recounted in *Guru Caritra*, the Gospel of this sect. Dattāreya with three faces representing Brahmā-Viṣṇu-Maheśa and the three *guṇas*—*Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*—is a popular deity in the Hindu pantheon praised alike by Sant Ekanātha and Sant Tukārām. The *ārati* in praise of Dattātreya by Ekanātha is very popular in this sect itself. Ekanath's *guru* Janārdana Svāmī, the *ziladar* of Daulatabad was a follower of this cult and Ekanātha himself was visited by Lord Dattātreya in the form of a *faqir*. Dasapant whose prolific verse exceeds a lakh was also of an ardent follower of the sects. In Maharashtra's religious life the sect has a place even today. But the reason could be that it is hoped to guarantee material results if one practises a particular way of life (*sakāma bhakti*). Its gospel the *Gurucaritra* is read by students who want to get through their examinations without reading their books and other persons with similar objects in view. Nṛsimha Sarasvatī was a strict believer in the *varṇāśarma dharma* and enjoined upon his followers particularly the Brāhmaṇas even more strict regulations. If we are to believe *Gurucaritra*, the Bahamanīs, the Adilshahs, the Qutubshahs were won over by Nṛsimha Sarasvatī with his miraculous powers. In a broader perspective his efforts can be regarded as an attempt to reconcile the Muslim rule to the Hindu way of life. But the effort connot be said to have succeeded.

The Ānanda Sampradāya regards Shahadatta Allama Prabhu who was probably a Muslim convert from Hinduism, as an incarnation of Dattātreya. The god Dattātreya gave *darśana*, to his devotees in the form of a *faqir*. To that extent the Ānanda Sampradāya may be regarded either as an Islamic version of Datta Sampradāya or at least as a sub-cult of that sect. To add to the variety of sects in Maharashtra we may mention the Caitanya Sampradāya which however, has nothing to do with Lord Gaurāṅga Prabhu. The *warkari* Tukārām's own *guru* was Bābā Caitanya. But the Bābā as well as other main exponents of the Caitanya sect were appropriated by the Muslims as their ally not so much because of their spirituality as for their alleged miraculous powers of granting material rewards. This also happened in respect of saintly persons following the cult of Dattātreya. This was one of the results of Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī's attempts to reconcile the Muslims to the Hindu way of life if such was his intention. Similarly Rāghava Caitanya, probable founder of the Caitanya sect around sixteenth century and his followers Keshava Caitayna, Bābā Caitayna and Ananta Caitanya are venerated by the Muslims as Hazrat Ladley Mashykh. Gesu Dasaz, Shaikh Shahabuddin and Shaikh Alauddin respectively. The followers of either Caitanya sect or Ānanda sect were limited in Maharashtra; these sects had more influence in the bordering regions of Karnataka.

On the border between Karnataka and Maharashtra near Kalyan also flourished the Liṅgāyata sect or Virśaivism. Whether Basaveśvara, the minister of king Bijjala Kalacuri of Basava Kalyan was its founder or not, he was certainly its greatest preacher.

He propagated his new sect in the twelfth century from Basava Kalyan, at present in Bidar district of Karnatāka not far away from the bordering district of Osmanabad in Maharashtra. The Lingayatas are known because they wear the *liṅga*, representing Lord Śiva, which is the size and shape of a small berry encased in a small casket. It hangs from their neck as enjoined upon them by Basaveśvara. The sect flourishing mainly on the Karnataka-Maharashtra borders is also of borderline importance in the religious life of medieval Maharashtra. Of greater importance though much smaller in membership is the Nageśa Sampradāya originating from Wadwal Siddha Nāganāth, a 'realised' saintly person believed to have been endowed with miraculous powers (*śiddha*). The followers of this sect have made significant contributions to Marathi literature.

II

The above-described sects and cults were overshadowed by the Warkari Sampradāya, certainly in popularity and in social and even in political significance according to some. The sect is called Warkari because of its annual pilgrimage (*wari*) to the shrine of Lord Viṭṭhala at Pandharpur (in Sholapur district). It is also described as the cult of Viṭṭhala, or the Bhagvata Sampradāya or the Pandharpur movement. The external mark of the Warkaris is the wearing of a necklace of *tulsi* seeds; it forbids them from falsehood, adultery, violence, meat-eating and drinking. At the same time it enjoins upon them fasting every fortnight on *ekādaśi* day, annual pilgrimage to Pandharpur in the company of followers in Aṣāḍha and Kārttika months, the recital of the *mantra* Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Hari as many times as possible, wearing of special *mudrās* (marks) on their faces, spending their time in the company of saintly and religious persons (*satsaṅga*), singing *bhajans* (devotional songs) and *kīrtans* (religious discourses interspersed with songs) are also very important for the Warkaris. These external marks have evolved by themselves. As a sect it is distinguished by its stress on devotion to and love for God as the major means of self-realisation and is thus fully in tune with the *bhakti* movement in other parts of India.

Rev. Macnicol speaks eloquently of the ecstasy bordering on which the Warkaris in large groups sing on the banks of the

Bhīmā river:

> On Bhimā's banks all gladness is
> In Pandhari the abode of Bliss.

This is the refrain of many a song that is re-echoed by the choirs of singers that journey with eager expectations, year after year, to Pandharpur to have the *darśan* of Viṭṭhala. "There is little outwardly to distinguish the worship of this shrine from that of a hundred others throughout the land. The image is rudely fashioned and has no grace of form. The worship is that which is commonly performed in any Hindu temple. What gives it distinctive character is the special song services, the *kīrtans* and *bhajans* that are conducted for hours at Pandharpur and other centres of the cult (e.g. Nandī, the *samadhi* of Jñāndeva and Dehu, the birthplace of Tukārām, both a few km off Pune) listening to the exhortations of some famous preacher or Haridāsa (lit. slave of God) who bases his discourses upon verses from such great saint-poets as Jñāneśvara, Nāmadeva, Ekanātha or Tukārām, with the teaching is skilfully combined the singing of a choir. These *kīrtans* have a profound emotional impact on the multitudes gathered in eager expectation at the holy place. The songs of the old saints awaken and in some degree satisfy the deep desires of their hearts. So also groups will gather for what are called *bhajans*, when there is no preaching, but they continue often for hours, singing those songs of longing and ecstasy." The thrill of these gatherings has to be experienced first-hand to be understood. It has also to be noted that a large portion of these *bhajans* furnished the paslmody of the reforming Prārthanā Samāj while some of the greatest of modern Indians, such as Justice M.G. Ranade and Sir R.G. Bhandarkar have found in them perhaps more than in the ancient scriptures, nourishment for their own religious life.

The verses of Jñānadeva, Nāmadeva, Ekanātha and Tukārām have been referred to in the above passage. Though nearly fifty different saints may be counted among the Sampradāya's followers, these four may be called the pillars of the Pandharpur movement. The pioneer was Jñānadeva (or Jñāneśvara AD 1275-96) a genius, son of an outcaste Brāhmana, apart from performing certain miracles (such as making a buffalo recite Vedas etc.) for the gullible, composed *Bhāvārtha-Dīpikā*, popularly called *Jñāneśvarī* within that brief life span. It is a Marathi commentary upon the *Bhagavad Gītā*, a popular exposition of a popular text which he chose as the instrument of his instruction. It is undoubtedly a traditional, philosophical work, but with his genius he translated the wider, timeless truths in idiom and wealth of homely illustration thereby bringing from the heights of the Himalayas as it were, philosophy and religion to the hearts and homes of Maharashtra. It graphically conveyed the message of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, a message of hope, of courage and duty to the bewildered people of Maharashtra in the days of their undoing at the hands of the invading Muslims. The context of the *Gītā*, the sermon of Śrī Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna and it so fulfilment in action—it all points out to one moral Dharma. Jñāneśvara swept away much nonsense, stimulated clear thinking and more than anything else, filled the people with a prior faith and hope in redemption. "Where the Moon is, there is Moonlight, where fire exists, there is burning power, where Kṛṣṇa is, there is victory. Confidence in Him is the beginning of *bhakti*," *Jñaneśvarī* is deemed to be of such universal significance and impart that the UNESCO has undertaken its translation into its six working languages: English, French, Russian, Spanish, Arabic and Chinese. Apart from it, for further popular enlightenment Jñāneśvara also wrote his *Amritarubhar* or "Elixir of Experience" and *abhaṅgs* or devotional lyrics.

Nāmadeva was a tailor and Jñāneśvara's contemporary but outlived him by over fifty years (d. 1350). He is regarded as the one who really set the sect upon proper footing and ushered in the Democracy of Devotion. "We have discovered the secret: let us propagate the Bhagavān's Dharma, what use are pilgrimage while the mind still remains full of evil?" He asked. To propound the philosophy learnt from Jñānadeva, however, he himself undertook a long pilgrimage and went as far as Ghuman in Punjab where he is still venerated as a great saint in Sikh gurudwaras. Nowhere, perhaps, is illustrated the underlying unity of *bhakti* movement all over India as in this triumphal tour of Nāmadeva. In his *abhaṅgs* which are on the lips of every Warkari he not only expressed his religious yearnings but also preached moral ideals illustrated with Purānic examples and used homely imagery for easy grasp. He penetrated to the essence through the externals. "A stone God and his mark devotee cannot satisfy each other. Such gods have been broken to pieces by the Turks, or have been flung into water," Says Nāma, "and yet they do not cry." Is it not amazing, he asks, that people should discard the animate and worship a dead stone? They kill a living ram to perform a Soma sacrifice; they paint a red stone with red lead and women and children fall prostrate before it. People worship a serpent made of clay but take up cudgels to kill a living one. All these are vain, declares Nāma: "the only pursuit of value is to utter the Name of God." Can pure *bhakti* be emphasised in more resounding terms?

Jñānadeva and Nāmadeva formed a nucleus for this democracy of devotion. Others soon followed from all ranks and classes of people. Nivṛitti, Sopāna Deva and Muktābai were Jñānadeva's own two brothers and the sister respectively. To this group came to belong Gora the potter, Savata the gardener, Sena the barber, Narahari the goldsmith, Chokha the Mahar (untouchable), Joga Paramanand, an oilman, Janābai, the maidservant, Sakhubai a housewife, Kanhopatra, a prostitute. (Only Sena, Kanhopatra and Sakhubai are separated from Nāmadeva by about a century.) They also sang of the Lord in their own way in their *abhangs* using similes and metaphors from their professions. Their value significance lie according to Rev. Macnicol, "in their affirmation of the claims of the human heart and the moral and religious sequences that follow from that affirmation. These are the elements in them that gave them power and enabled them to make an appeal so far reaching and so profound. It was a splendid effort of the Hindu soul to break the bondage under which it had lain so long. It at last stirred in its long sleep, and turned its drowsy eyes towards the dawn."

From the middle of the fifteenth century we come across another cluster of saints: Bhānudāsa, Janārdana Svāmī and Ekanātha. They are distinguished not by their ecstatic devotion or extreme emotionalism but signify a balance between other-worldliness and the duties and obligations of this mundane life. Bhānudāsa was born at Paithan on the Godavari about 1448. He is supposed to have brought back the image of Viṭṭhala from Hampi (Vijaynagar) whither it had been removed for safety from Muslim hands. He was the great grandfather of Ekanātha. His disciple was Janārdana Svāmī, *guru* of Ekanātha, and *Qilādar* of Daulatabad till his death in 1579. He devoted himself to the service of God even while he was performing his worldly duties a model for Ekanātha for combination of spiritual and worldly life. He was respected alike by Hindus and Muslims. Ekanātha (1533-99) all through his life was noted for his industry, regularity, patience and equanimity. His shaming an arrogant Muslim into repentance by sheer patience, his redemption of a prostitute, his kindly treatment of an untouchable boy and a thirsty donkey and several other instances speak not only of his saintly qualities but of practical spirituality.

Ekanātha wrote works like *Catuḥślokī Bhāgavatā*, *Rukminī Svayamvara*, *Bhāvārtha Rāmāyaṇa* in which he urged the establishment of true Rāmarājya, and edited the text of *Jñaneśvarī*. But his reputation chiefly rests on his great commentary on the eleventh chapter of the *Bhagavata* (*Ekanāthī Bhāgavata*), another gospel of the Warkaris after *Jñaneśvarī*. It covers every conceivable subject connected with Vedāntic philosophy with religion, with morality, but the predominant preaching is of *bhakti* as the main means of self-realization and Bhāgavata Dharma as an embodiment of moral ideals and ethical values. The pundits of Varanasi were enraged at this what the vernacular they considered as vulgarization of a sacred Sanskrit text but soon realised their error and arranged the celebration of the completed manuscript by procession in a palanquin. Ekanātha also wrote a great deal which might be described as folk literature spiritualising the traditions and aspects of practical professional life.

Tukārām (1608-49), a contemporary of young Shivaji is at the summit and culmination of this long line of devotees traced above. A petty grocer of Dehu (a village not very far from Pune) his heart was not in business. Recent researches have revealed that there were arguments in the family as to who should carry on the family tradition of having at least one of its members fully devoted to religious life. Tukārām was the obvious choice, for God was Tukārām's all in all. All earthly things, money and property, he counted as filth. God was his food and drink. The world was nothing to him. Moreover he is supposed to have been blessed by a *guru*, Bābā Caitanya. His sharp-tongued wife had certainly no sympathy towards his spiritual yearnings. He himself by nature was most kind-hearted. Mahīpati, the biographer of the saint-poets, described him as helping the sick, carrying the burdens of the weary, giving water to the thirsty and food to the hungry, going on errands for the fame. It was no wonder he failed in his business, and was carried away by his grand obsession and completely took to spiritual life and the ways of a mystic. Although presumably unlettered he was so full of love for God in a variety of forms that he burst into unexpected but inspired poetry called *abhaṅgs*. These *abhaṅgs* or the cries of a heart and soul which sensed Viṭṭhala in everything around the animate as well as the inanimate world. Although a mystic poet at his best Tukārām can establish rapports with the common man to such an extent that till today he is the greatest in popular estimation, certainly the widest in the extent of his influence. The popularity of his *abhaṅgs* has continued undiminished till today, and many of them have been still in vogue and counted as proverbs. The reason could be that, his spirituality and longing for Viṭṭhala is deeply steeped with humanism. Pining for Viṭṭhala he repeatedly stressed that he favours those who commisserate with the suffering humanity and try to alleviate the miseries of this world.

III

To those who want to connect the religious revival as demonstrated in these various sects and sub-sects with the rise of the political power of the Marathas, Rāmadāsa (1608-83), supplies the missing link, so to say. Unlike the saint-poets of the Warkari cult Rāmadāsa established his own Samartha Samparadāya and founded many *maṭhas* and temples for the propagation of his faith even outside Maharashtra. Moreover he had close relations with Shivaji himself though the exact nature of this relation is clouded with controversy. At the age of tewlve Narayan Suryaji Thosar fled from the marriage-altar and spent the next twelve years in *sādhanā*. His *Karuṇāṣṭakas* during this period evoke his spiritual yearnings. He spent the next twelve years in pilgrimage all over India and even in Nepal. He was blessed by Lord Rāmācandra Himself and thereafter became Samartha (powerful) Rāmadāsa. He then took up the organisation of his disciples and his sect on firm foundations. He set up eleven temples of Hanumān to begin with, several temples of Lord Rāma, visited Pandharpur too, and spent all the remaining years of his life in personally propagating the philosophy of his sect, travelling all over Maharashtra and beyond and establishing numerous *maṭhas* for the purpose. He propounded traditional Hindu philosophy in his own way in his famous composition *Dāsabodha* sometime around AD 1655.

Among Maharashtrian historians there has been never a ending debate over the exact nature of Rāmadāsa's relationship with Shivaji. At the beginning of this century archivist historian Rajwade propounded the view that Rāmadāsa was *Rashtraguru* actively guiding Shivaji in his political career. Prof. N.R. Pathak spent almost a lifetime declaring time and again that Rāmadāsa's work and influence were primarily religious and only secondarily political. Such is the opinion of the English biographers of Rāmadāsa, Rev. Deming and Rev. Abbot. Dr. A.G. Pawar has gone to the other extreme and regards Rāmadāsa as no better than another spiritual *guru* of Shivaji, like Bābā Yakut or Mauni Bābā. The truth lies somewhere in between these extremes. Both Shivaji and Rāmadāsa were the creators as well as the participators in the new life that was surging through Maharashtra during the seventeenth century. That they were contemporaries working for a common cause is undeniable. The controversy regarding the personal contacts between Shivaji and Rāmadāsa is not of secondary importance as stated by Prof. S.R. Sharma but of primary significance inasmuch as on it depends the issue of Rāmadāsa's active guidance to Shivaji in his political affairs. The earliest date assigned to their first meeting is 1649. But this has been derived from internal evidence while if archival evidence is to be believed it could not be earlier than 1672 by which time Shivaji had already attained a great deal of success in his life's mission of creating an independent State of the Marathas.

A dispassionate perusal of the *Dāsabodha* indicates clearly that it is neither a political testament nor a philosophy of history but a work of metaphysics combined with religious instruction. Although in Rāmadāsa's life and psalmody Rāma and Hanumān are of great importance they were not his exclusive deities. Tuljā Bhavānī was of equal importance. To her he prayed, "I ask Thee of only one thing my mother: Promote the cause of the king in our very life time. I have heard of Thy exploits in the past, but show Thy power to day." There are several other hymns and *āratis* composed by him in praise of other gods and goddesses.

His prayer to Tuljā Bhavānī cited above, his correspondence with Shivaji (collected after 1672), his detailed advice to Sambhaji on his accession to follow his father Shivaji's way, his exhortations on the duties of the king and the soldiers, his outbursts on the political degradation and social perversions of his period, his cries of pure joy in the kingdom of bliss (*anandvati bhuvan*) brought about in Maharashtra by Shivaji—all these and many other utterances of his have misled many historians to looking upon Rāmadāsa as one politically oriented. But there is no evidence whatsoever to suggest that he ever dabbled in political affairs of his time. In his works he has used the term Rajkaran more to connote cleverness or alertness, circumspection in action rather than politics. His Maharashtra Dharma is not very different from Hindu religion as practised elsewhere. At the same time Rāmadāsa was undoubtedly far more aware than the Warkaris, of the religious anarchy, social degradation and political situation of his time and yearned for all-round emancipation. It cannot be denied that activism characterised his teachings, that he possessed practical wisdom and was endowed with an intellectual pragmatism which he brought to bear upon spiritual life as well. The Warkari Sampradāya evolved of its own whereas Rāmadāsa made positive attempts to organise his sect. His instructions to his *mahants* to gather and win over religious assemblies are so practical and detailed that they can be applied to workers in the political field as well and are hence liable to misconstruction. Rāmadāsa more than any other saint of medieval Maharashtra endeavoured to provide a sound organisational foundation for the religious life of the people. He drew the people's minds to the performances and duties and stressed all-round development of human personality. His religious zeal and fervour recall to our mind those of Swami Vivekananda in modern times (while the Warkaris remind us of Lord Gaurāṅga Prabhu).

As it happened Rāmadāsa's disciples and followers, be it Dinkar Gosavi, Giridhar Swami, Ātmārambuwa Ekkelihalikar or the Das Panchayatan itself, always strictly emphasized Rāmadāsa's religious preachings in the traditional manner. Prof. S.M. Mate has dubbed it as Rāmadāsa's defeat at his disciples hands. It is noteworthy that the fervour of Rāmadāsa attracted saint-poets of other sects. Besides Rāmadāsa Jayarāmaswāmī Vadgaonkar, Raṅganāthaswāmī Nigalikar, Ānandamūrti Brahmanalkar and Keshavswami Bhaganagarkar are the other four saints of the Daspanchayatan (quintet of *das*). Of these the last was a Nāthpanthī and the two before him belonged to the Ānanda Sampradāya mentioned earlier. While these and other followers of Rāmadāsa continued to interpret Rāmadāsa as yet another other-worldly saint-poet, Rāmadāsa's nineteenth and early twelfth centuries admirers took him up as an idol for nationalistic worship. Many of Tilak's followers drew their spiritual sustenance from Rāmadāsa as they understood him. The appreciative articles written by a (later) ardent devotee of *bhakti* cult like L.R. Pangarkar (twentieth century biographer of saints and historian of Marathi literature) were considered so seditious as to be confiscated in 1908! S.S. Dev felt so inspired by Rāmadāsa that he devoted his entire life to the collection and publication of everything relating to this saint, mostly at his expense. All that we know of Rāmadāsa and his sect today is mostly due to Dev's life mission.

IV

There is undoubted social significance attached to the work of the various religious sects which have been briefly described above. The late Justice M.G. Ranade was practically the first historian of the Marathas to sum it up in a very eloquent fashion. "The religious movement," says Ranade, "which, commencing with Jñānadeva who lived in the fifteenth century (*sic*), can be traced to the end of the last century (eighteenth century) as a steady growth in spiritual values. It gave us a literature of considerable value in the varnacular language of the country. It modified the strictness of the old spirit of caste exclusiveness. It raised the śūdra classes to a position of spiritual power and social importance, almost equal to that of the Brāhmaṇas. It gave sanctity to the family relations, and raised the status of woman. It made the nation more humane, at the same time more prone to hold together by mutual toleration. It suggested and partly carried out a plan of reconciliation with the Mohammedans. It subordinated the importance of rites and ceremonies, and of pilgrimages and fasts, and of learning and contemplation, to the higher excellence of worship by means of love and faith. It checked the excesses of polytheism. It tended in all these ways to raise the nation generally to a higher level of capacity both of thought and action, and prepared it in a way no other nation in India was prepared to take the lead in re-establishing a united native power in the place of foreign domination. These appear to us to be the principal features of the religion of Maharashtra, which Sant Rāmadāsa had in view when he advised Shivaji's son to follow in his father's footsteps and propagate his faith, at once tolerant and catholic, deeply spiritual and yet not iconoclastic."

A closer analysis of the religious revival in Maharashtra indicates that Ranade certainly has overestimated its significance, mainly because he has equated preaching with practice and seems to believe that what was preached was achieved. Preaching alone can rarely bring about any great transformation on a large scale. Nevertheless the saint-poets in their own way did elevate the people to a higher plane of existence. In medieval Maharashtra religion and whatever went in its name exercised far greater influence on the minds of the people than any doing of the political rulers, be they Hindu or Muslim. The saint-poets tended to purify, simplify and revitalise Hindu religion and to that extent the religious movements, sects and sub-sects on the whole had a beneficial impact upon society.

First of all the domination of the Brāhmaṇas in the spiritual sphere was broken down by the incessant preachings of the saint-poets. They asserted the dignity of the human soul which is quite independent of the accident of its birth. They repeatedly pointed out that anyone could attain salvation by faith and love despite one's birth in an humble caste or class. The saints fostered a democratic spirit by emphasizing the equality of all men and women in the eyes of God. Particularly in the Warkari movement caste differences were forgotten in the annual pilgrimages to Pandharpur and the mixed religious gatherings on the way and on the banks of the Chandrabhāgā (or the Bhīmā). They certainly ushered in the democracy of devotion.

The saint-poets helped the common man in another way. They pointed out that it was not necessary to abandon material life for the sake of salvation. *Saṁnyāsa* or retiring to the forest was not a prerequisite for spiritual attainments. Such bliss was possible in spite of one's being burdened with the cares of tending and raising a family provided one had enough faith and devotional love for God. Doing one's duty, carrying on one's hereditary profession in the right spirit, attending to the obligations of a worldly life, were not incompatible with spiritual life and attainments. It has to be noted that while Vedas had been made inaccessible to woman by Manu and thus traditional Vedic religion denied any hope to women as a class the saint-poets assured all classes including women spiritual progress if they followed the path of devotion (*bhakti*). Women are to be found in promising positions in all newly arisen sects.

The saint-poets strongly condemned the crude worship of aboriginal gods and village goddesses and the frightful rites and sacrifices carried on in the name of worship of some primitive divinity. They denounced in no uncertain terms the worship of stocks and stones and the offerings to a merciful when the image did not symbolise the Supreme Being. At the same time they were practical enough to appreciate that an average man finds the worship of the formless Absolute very difficult. Yet the saints of Maharashtra always regarded image worship as purely ancillary to real faith and devotion. Also if we find a great deal of religious toleration in medieval Maharashtrian society it can be easily attributed to the preaching of the saint-poets. They were never too strong in condemning sects other than their own. They did not consume those who abandoned their own sects and embraced other ways. On the other hand there was a great deal of mutual exchange – give-and-take. As we have noticed there was an absolutely free intercourse among various sects. The sectarian differences were never carried to the extreme as in South India. Religious persecution of one sect by another was unheard of. No instances have come to light of violent disturbance, large-scale migrations or desertion of villages on account of such persecution.

Politically speaking the creation of a Maratha nation was to an extent made possible by the saint-poets deliberately fostered the growth and development of Marathi language and literature. Language is one of the potent forces that moulds men into a nationality. By choosing the language of the people for religious instruction the saint-poets created a common bond and common heritage which could be utilised by Shivaji later on. Divided as the medieval Maharashtrian society was by castes and subcastes, sects and subsects, each of which recommended its own distinctive way of life, nothing could be more effective in uniting it than a common language. In those days of rudimentary means of communications and absence of mechanical mass media *kīrtans* and *bhajans* were the main instruments for bringing large bodies of men together. This religious fraternity singing devotional songs and listening to discourses in their own tongue, created ties that went far beyond the purely spiritual.

All the saint-poets were men of God and there was no hypocrisy about them. Their sincerity and honesty of purpose are transparent in their verses. They practised what they preached. They led exemplary lives which beneficially influenced large number of men and women in later generations. Whatever the actual words of their poetic sermons and the differences in interpreting the God and the world there was always a strong undercurrent of high moral values, lofty ethical norms, noble sentiments and dignified approach. It appears in their preaching. How could the society remain unaffected albeit in a limited way? By intentionally choosing to preach and write in the language of the people, by giving poetic expression to their deep religious experiences and emotions and also by making a seminal contribution to the growth of Marathi they forged the common bond of language which is one of the most powerful factors in the creation of a sense of nationality. If Jñanadeva's *Bhāvārtha-Dipikā* and Ekanātha's *Bhāgavata* are unrivalled classics of popular enlightenment, the *abhaṅga gāthās* (collections) of Nāmadeva and Tukārām are unique repositories of the Quintessence of true religion combined with practical wisdom for the common man. All the saint-poets of medieval Maharashtra together created a cultural heritage which Shivaji sought to defend and propagate through political independence.

V

While attaching little importance generally to the religious movements and sects in Maharashtra. V.K. Rajwade, however, agreed with many others that these succeeded in halting the spread of Islam on a large scale. The scale of Islamic invasion of Maharashtra itself has to be measured. Sufi proselytizers from the North had descended into the Deccan even before the Khalji invasion and we have reason to believe that Alaud-din Khalji's way was paved with their efforts. Momin Arif (Devagiri), Jalalud-din Gauj Khan Baba Shafud-din and Shamsuddin (Hyderabad), Hyat Qalandar (Mangial Pir) Hisamud-din (Gulbarga), Sheikh Sahid (Talikot), Shaikh Sarmart (Sagar-Shahapur), Shaha Quta Rahman (Ellichpur), were active during the days of the Yādava rulers themselves. But they become much more agressive when the Hindus were politically subjugated and the Bahamnis replaced the Yādavas. They had close connections with the court, dabbled in royal politics, many of them had acquired wealth too and were politically supported in their activities. The concept of the Sufi as the other-worldly mystic in Islam is erroneous. The celebrated Sufi Saint Hazrat Nizamud-din of Delhi sent seven hundred Sufi activists to the Deccan first under the leadership of Shaikh Munajud-din in AD 1300. After his death in 1309 another batch of seven hundred was sent under his brother Burhanud-din Garib Shah. Daulatabad became their headquarters for the spread of Islam in Maharashtra. With political support they desecrated temples, destroyed shrines and monasteries, and converted with violence Hindus into Muslims and temples into mosques.

At the same time it must not be supposed that it was nothing but religious oppression throughout. Muslim rule in this part of India tended to be more tolerant than elsewhere. That a saintly person like Janārdanasvāmī, *guru* of Ekanātha, was not only retained as the commander of the Daulatabad fort by the Bahamanis but was also respected by them for his spiritual status may, perhaps be regarded as indicative of their religious policy in general, though this largely depended on the individual ruler. It is said that instead of Friday (which is holy to the Muslims) Thursday was declared a public holiday at Daulatabad since it was the day of Dattātreya, Janārdanasvāmī's god. On the other hand we have the story of his disciple Ekanātha on whom a Muslim spat every time he returned from a bath in the Godavari. Ekanātha ultimately put him to shame by his saintly patience, but the Muslims' action shows how confident their community felt of being backed by the ruling power even in their misconduct. Ekanātha's poem entitled "Hindu-Turuk Saṃvād" (dialogue between a Hindu and a Muslim) in which each criticises the religion of the other but finally embraces the other, realizing that they are looked upon alike by God is more indicative of the saint's own attitude than of the actual state of relations between the two communities.

It cannot be denied, however, that many Hindus were attracted by the miracle-making powers and *siddhis* which some of the Sufis were presumed to have acquired. Sant Ekanātha makes a reference to Daval Malik, one such saint. In the fifteenth century this disciple of Hazrat Shah Alam earned a great reputation for his curative powers for not only human beings but even animals. He was said to have received these powers through Hazrat Shah Alam. Consequently he excercised enormous influence over the Hindus. Nearly 360 of his *chillas* (or enshrined relics) were thronged more by the Hindus than the Muslims. Even Brāhmaṇas took to worshipping Daval Malik. And even today there are certain Brāhmaṇa families bearing the surname Davalbhaktas. This was not confined only to the communers. For example Malaji Bhosle, Shivaji's grandfather was believed to have begot two sons through the blessings of Shah Sharif of Ahmadnagar. Hence he named them Shahaji and Sharifji and this has been recorded in the earliest biography of Shivaji (Sabhasad, AD 1696). Sant Ekanātha makes a reference that many Hindus embraced Islam of their own free will, obviously with an intention to carry favour with the ruling powers.

What was the attitude of the saint-poets to the desecration of the Hindu religion and culture by the Muslims? Nāmadeva utilised it as an instance to moralise against meaningless image worship. Ekanātha derided the Daval Malik devotees who became *faqirs* once a year and ate the leavings of Turks, while Rāmadāsa, true to his nature, cried out in anguish and urged protection. It would not be wrong to assume that the saint-poets with their repeated preaching of what according to them was true religion and their exhortations or ethical behaviour and the path of virtue could check such self-seeking Hindus as embraced Islam for material benefits. The Muslim kings also benefited from the alleged curative powers of Hindu saints as noticed in respect of Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī earlier.

Conversion was a one-way traffic. This was so because of the rigidity and inflexibility of doctrinaire of Hinduism. To be a Hindu one had to be born in that religion, a matter of pure chance and there was no other way to become a Hindu. Of course Hinduism has never been a proselytizing religion either. Consequently Hinduism could not claim and lost born in other faiths but following a Hindu way of life because of this inflexible approach.

Despite this handicap the greatest achievement of the Marathi saint-poets vis-a-vis Islam was not so much curbing its growth as in excercising their influence over those born into Islam in such a way that they came to adopt Hindu way of life and thinking and themselves began to preach in terms of Hindu philosophy. We recount below briefly the lives and works of such Muslim Marathi saint-poets.

VI

Shaikh Muhammad Shrigondekar (1570-1660)

This author of the voluminous work *Yogasaṅgrām* and other spiritual excercises can be regarded as the most prominent and illustrative among the Muslim Marathi saint-poets. He has been generally regarded as the Marathi reincarnation of Sant Kabir. The eighteenth century prolific pundit poet Moropanth in his poem, *Saumani Mala* reverentially refers to him as a great devotee. From his own poetry we learn that his father was Syed Raja Mahammad and mother was called Phulai a Hindu sounding name. Raja Mohammad was *qiladar* of Dharur. The more celebrated Sant Chand Bodhle was Raja Mahammad's disciple to whom he entrusted the religious education of his son. Shaikh Muhammad appears to have studied *Jñānrśvarī* in particular as its influence can be seen in *Yogasaṅgrām*. Raja Mahammad belonged to the Qadiri section of the Sufis and so Sheikh Muhmmad was also a Qadiri Sufi by birth. Chand Bodhle, Sheikh Muhammad's *guru* was no intolerant sectarian. He has been regarded as the quarter of Lord Dattātreya himself. Chand Bodhle taught his disciple the fundamental unity between Islam and Hinduism. Chatrapati Shivaji's grandfather Malaji Bhosle was also a liberal-minded Hindu. We have seen earlier how he worshipped Shah Sharif of Ahmednagar. He became a disciple of Sheikh Muhammad to whom he granted the village of Shrigonde (district Nagor) under his jurisdiction around AD 1595, where he spent the rest of his life preaching what his *guru* had taught him, castigating ritualistic religion and cruel social practices. He was not dismayed by the destruction of Pandharpur for he knew that God did not reside in stone images which could be broken. Sheikh Muhammad was caught in a peculiar dilemma. The fanatics among his co-religionists castigated him as a *kafir* whereas the Hindus thought that his condemnation of the prevailing religious practices originated from the fact of his being a Muslim. But he was convinced that spiritual knowledge and enlightenment had no caste, creed or religion. Shaikh Muhammad has stated that he began to be listened to with respect, albeit gradually, by Śūdras and Brāhmaṇas alike. Jayarāma Swāmi Vadgaonkar, of the Samartha sect became his close friend. He was bitten by the snake thrice, was severely condemned and abused by his evil-minded enemies but he survived it all to attain the fame of a great Muslim saint and died at the ripe old age of ninety. His *magnum opus Yoga Saṅgram* is dated AD 1645. Despite all his Hindu influences and preachings he appears to have died a Muslim, for his tomb is a *dargah*. Obviously his contrives did not ostracise him altogether. He was a family man and according to *Siraj-i-Qadini* his son and successors continued in the Qadiri sect. His son

Davalji and grandson Hakimji have composed *āratīs* in his praise. Apart from his own descendants he attracted Hindu disciples from various classes such as Mudha Pangul (a caste which sings typical compositions). Dayaldas Devang (Kannada—weaver), Raghunath Yogi, etc. who have written about him. Even Sant Rāmadāsa has composed an *āratī* on him. Shaikh Muhammad wrote mainly in Marathi but his compositions in Hindi, Urdu and Persian are also available though proportionately much less. The theme of *Yoga-Saṅgram* is the congress of the Ego and Pride by the Soul. *Pavanavijaya, Nishkalanka Prabodha* are his lesser known works. In his writings he has attacked polytheism, the silly and cruel vows such as hook swinging etc., animal scarifice, prostitution by *muralis*, the iniquities of the Hindu caste system, etc. According to him all those born from the womb of the mother are Muslims and therefore there are no *kafirs*. When he was dismayed by fanaticism he exclaimed, 'Ignorance is Muslim, Knowledge is Brahmin. He urges, 'Brothers, open your eyes, and see for yourselves. The Muslims call Sacha Pir who is the same as the Complete Guru of the Marathas. He attacks superstitions, perverted religious practices, the hypocrisies, the inadequacies. In all this he is no less than a Warkari saint-poet. He sings in praise of Lord Viṭṭhala and uses the Hindu concept that Viṭṭhala has placed his hands on his waist to indicate that the material world is only waistdeep and that we can keep our heads over it. His style is influenced by *Jñāneśvarī* and he often refers to Sant Ekanāth's *Bhāgavata*. Such a personality appears to have been accepted by his community at last; for he rests eternally in a *dargah* and is venerated by Hindus and Muslims alike.

Shah Muntoji Bahamani (*1575-1650*)

Legend has it that he was born in one of the branches of the royal family of the Bahamanis of Bidar. It is difficult to determine his age but Dr. Dhere surmises it as given above from internal evidence. If this is correct then he could not have been born in the ruling family as the Bahamani rule had come to an end by AD 1520. There is a traditional story about his spiritual awakening. He with his consort was sitting by the window of his mansion eating plaintains and throwing down the peels. There were strict orders to the guards not to disturb their privacy. Nevertheleesa beggar was found entering the premises and licking the peels.

Muntoji asked the guards to punish the beggar. So he was thrashed by them but he only laughed. So Muntoji stopped the guards whereupon the beggar began to cry. Asked to explain, the beggar said that if for eating only the peels he was so severely punished, he wondered what dire consequences awaited Muntoji who ate the whole plantains. If for entering the premises he was thrashed what would happen to Muntoji who slept there every day? These words opened the eyes of Muntoji and much in the manner of Lord Buddha he left the mansion and went to Pandhapur in quest of peace of mind and spiritual enlightenment. There he became a disciple of Sahajanand Svāmī of Kalyani belonging to Ānanda Sampradāya. His *guru* gave him a copy of Mukundrāja's *Viveka Sindhu* (a favourite of the Ānanda sect), named him anew as Mrityunjaya also with the sectarian name Dhansagaranand and even attempted to convert him to formal Brahmanism. But his *guru*'s efforts were thwarted by the Brāhmanas. Doctrinaire Brahmanism was still more powerful than any of the newly founded sects. After his *guru*'s *samādhi* he shifted to Narayanpur nearby. Kalyani was the centre of Liṅgāyata sect and many Liṅgāyatas were influenced by Mrityunjaya's teachings and become his disciples. Mahīpati, the author of *Bhakta Vijaya* (a collection of biographical sketches of saints and devotees) gives the story of two dogs of Mrityunjaya (Vedānta and Siddhānta by name) awakening 10,000 *liṅgas* and returning them to the weavers only after being importuned. The story demonstrates mutual give-and-take among the various Hindu sects. The Liṅgāyats began to call Mṛityunjaya as Dhansagar Ayya, the Kannada, variation of his sectarian name. But despite Mrityunjaya's excursions into Hinduism and adopting a Hindu way of life his tomb at Narayanpur is known as the *dargah* of Murtaja Qadiri as he originally belonged to the Qadiri sect of the Sufis. The Hindus are prominent only at the annual celebrations at the *dargah*. The nearby Śiva temple is managed by the Hindus while the *dargah* precincts are full of Hindu relics. In his own composition Mrityunjaya has been greatly influenced by *Viveka Sindhu*, whose style and idiom he adopts. The manner in which he extols the greatness of his *guru* is typically Hindu. He has sung of Lord Kṛṣṇa and assures his readers that he has united the Hindus and Muslims through his work *Pañcikaran*. The latter explains that there is no basic difference in Hindu and Islamic philosophy and thought and that there is much common ground in Sufi preaching and Hindu thinking. One Hindu appears to have been his favourite disciple as evinced from available compositions of Madhayya. *Sidha Sanket Prabandha* is Mrityunjaya's largest work (9 chapters in 2000 verses). It is in the nature of spiritual guidance given by Rāma to Sītā as described in *Padma Purāṇa*. In *Prakāśa Dīpa* Mṛtynejay endeavours to give the essence of Upaniṣads, Vedas and Śāstras. In *Pañcikaran* the author has given the Persian glossary for Hindu spiritual terminology in Sanskrit. (e.g. Sthula Deha-Wajibul Wajud etc.) Muntoji's works are entirely religious and spiritual in nature, the approach being that of traditional Hindu philosophy, but more in the nature of *Viveka Sindhu*. It is not influenced by *Jñāneśvarī* or the Warkari's *abhaṅgs*.

Husain Ambar Khan (*AD 1602-?*)

Ambar Khan's main claim to fame is his Marathi rendering of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. Hardly any biographical details are available about his spiritual or material life. Dr Dhere argues that Ambar Khan's father Yakut might have served in the Nizamshahi army and helped in Shahaji's efforts (which proved fruitless in the end) in restoring the Nizamshahi. He appears to have migrated to the south presumably with Shahaji. Certain it is that his son Husain was born in AD 1602, much before this migration according to Vaidyanathan, a writer from Thanjavur and a great admirer of Husain Ambar(so much so that he regards him as an incarnation of the Almighty in this *Kali yuga*). Husain completed the Marathi rendering of the Sanskrit *Gītā* in 1652. A copy was made within one year at Gingee (now available in Saraswati Mahal Library at Thanjavur) and therefore may be presumed to have been written in that region. The liberal, religious atmosphere at Daulatabad, however, might have influenced Husain Ambar a great deal. He begins by offering his worship to Lord Gaṇeśa who overcomes all obstacles, particularly the greatest obstacle of differences everywhere. Hussain's work is practically a literal rendering of the *Gītā* with no original comments of any kind. Not everyone would appreciate his astounding claim, quite unlike any other saint-poet, that he is the 'crowning jewel of spiritual *cognoscent*. In fact unless more works of Husain became available it would be difficult to determine his position among the saint-poets.

Shaikh Sultan (AD *1705-68*)

Like Wadwal Siddha Nagnath, Gopalnath was a spiritual leader of the eighteenth century who had among his disciples men and women, the upper caste ones as well as the lower caste people *kirtankars* as well as *shahirs*, Hindus as well as Muslims. Gopalnath had migrated from Daulatabad to Tripuri, a village twelve km off Satara, where he entered his final *samādhi*. It is at Tripuri that he found a Muslim disciple, viz., Shaikh Sultan. Unlike some other Muslim saint poets, Shaikh Sultan was not bitten by the spiritual bug. On the other hand he was a *shahir* (i.e. a poet who sings typical *lavani* compositions, composing them on the spot and entering into spiritual controversies in verse form.) He belonged to Kaarve near Karhad (also in Satara district) and it is said that he enjoyed the patronage of Shahu Chhatrapati the first. After enjoying royal patronage and receiving robes of honour etc., he was passing by the *maṭha* of Gopalnath. The latter called him and requested him to sing his compositions. When be began to sing Gopalnath asked him the meaning. Shaikh Sultan was dismayed, for, he could not explain. Gopalnath asked him to give up *shahiri* singing and take to *kīrtan* (religious discourses). Just as Shaikh Sultan's pride was broken and he was converted to spiritualism by Gopalnath, this great *siddha* also humbled another arrogant disciple Madhavnath who had begun to pride himself over his religious discourses. He told him, "I will make a Muslim far superior to you." The Muslim was Shaikh Sultan whose potentialities had already been realised by Gopalnath. Tradition has it that Gopalnath gave his hold-eaten faod to Shaikh Sultan and thus transmitted his powers. Shaikh Sultan became a well-known religious preacher. The tradition is alive till today; at the death anniversary celebrations of Gopalnath the honour of playing the *vīṇa* is a Muslim's. Some other disciples of Gopalnath built a residence for Shaikh Sultan at Tripuri (the relics of which can be still seen) where he spent the rest of his life serving his *guru* and performing religious discourses (*kīrtans*). Shaikh Daji, younger brother of Shaikh Sultan also became Gopalnath's disciple and shared his elder brother's life at Tripuri. Some orthodox Hindus, however, did not relish that a Muslim should give Hindu religious discourses and complained to the Peshwa (either Nana Saheb or Madhavrao I). The Peshwa invited Shaikh Sultan to Pune for a discourse and was so pleased with it that he gave him a garden at Munjeri (near

Swar Gate in Pune) as a present (the *maṭha* erected there still exists). Shaikh Sultan used to go to Mahuli every day for his bath in the sacred river Krishna. In old age he could not perform this journey end so his *guru* told him to dig a well in his residence where the Krishna river would present herself. So he did and so did the Krishna. Another version has it that the dying Shaikh wanted to have his *samādhī* built on the banks of the Krishna. A sceptic challenged him to bring the Krishna herself to his residence and he did so by digging a well which is flooded with mud-soaked water in the monsoon as the Krishna is. Sehaikh Sultan's *samādhi* is at his Tripuri residence, Viṭṭhalnath, a nephew of Gopalnath, has sung his praise as the *guru*'s unequalled disciple. Shaikh Sultan's works have got mixed up with those of his brother (Shaikh Dsaji) who was a first class poet and religious preacher himself and has used the brother's name instead of his own in his compositions. The Shaikh's own compositions include Puranic stories of Satī Anasuyā, the birth of Lord Gaṇeśa, the birth of Hanumān, the story of Mahaśivarātri etc. Yet another poem tells the story of a prostitute and her two lovers who all attained spiritual salvation when they gave up their wicked ways. A couple of his *āratīs* are entirely spiritual metaphors while a few of his Hindi compositions express the mystic experiences in various colours. The Peshwa present to him is an example of the liberal, religious policy of the Marathas, which extended patronage to the deserving irrespective of caste, creed or faith. We may also venture to suggest that, perhaps, because of the Peshwa rule, the Muslims hesitated to appropriate Shaikh Sultan as belonging to their faith.

Shah Muni (c. 1756-1807)

His family for four generations had been following liberal, Hindu traditions despite being Muslim originally. His great-grandfather Shanabawa, born at Allahabad, was a devotee of Śiva. He knew Persian, but after shifting to Ujjain, sometime after 1728 when Malwa came under the influence and eventual rule of the Marathas, he appears to have picked up Marathi as well. At Ujjain was born to him a son whom he named as Janoji. Though Ujjain is a holy place for the Śaivites, Janoji was a devotee of Viṣṇu. His son Mansing was born at Siddhatek (Nagar district, Maharashtra) and was appropriately a worshipper of Gaṇeśa, Siddhatek is one of the eight shrines of Gaṇeśa (Aṣṭa-Vināyaka) Shah Muni himself was born at Pedgaon (Nagar district), just twelve miles off saint-poet Shaikh Muhammad's Shrigonda. He informs us that one Munindra Swami a *saṇnyāsi* belonging to Datta Sampradāya blessed him at Varanasi around 1779. Shah Muni's celebrated work *Siddhānta Bodha* shows the devout regard with which he looked upon his *guru*. Only merit earned in previous birth made him so fortunate as to have such a Master, a typically Hindu concept. Shah Muni does not appear to have settled down at any particular place. His *Siddhānta Bodha* was composed at Pathari Manolan (Satara district) in AD 1794 while he died at Shahagad around 1807. Shah Muni's tomb is maintained by five Muslim families who are vegetarians, teetotellers, worship Kṛṣṇa and regard Mahānubhāvas as their intimates. The other Muslims in the township do not participate in the death anniversary celebrations. Since *Siddhānta Bodha* has a place of honour among the Mahānubhāvas who otherwise regard works composed by other sects as heretical, Shah Muni also must be looked upon as a Mahānubhāva. *Siddhānta Bodha* itself bears testimony to it as it contains concepts such as inferiority of the Brahmā-Viṣṇu-Maheśa trinity vis-a-vis the Almighty. Kṛṣṇa and Datta as deities for worship but not incarnations of Viṣṇu, the Pañcakṛṣṇas, the absolute supremacy of Chakradhar and so on. Strangely enough towards the end of his work Shah Muni adopts *advaita* philosophy. The Warkari influence is evident in his admiration and praise for Pandharpur and obeisance to the Warkari saints whom the Mahānubhāvas have always ignored. This syncretical approach has led to the popularity of *Siddhānta-Bodha* among all classes. The work is slightly larger than *Jñāneśvarī* and contains a mixture of Mahānubhāva teachings, *advaita* philosophy and Puranic stories in lyrical language. Shah Muni holds Kabir in high esteem. He does not believe in the caste system or its hierarchy. He explains away the Hindu-Muslim hostility with the help of imaginary tales. He is, however, dismayed by such hostility and at one place expresses his sorrow for being born in a community which condemned Hinduism, derided Hindu scriptures, desecrated temples, took delight in killing cows on Hindu festive days and betrayed the true God thereby. He is as much aware of the fundamental similarities as of some basic differences between the two religions. Shah Muni's approach, philosophy and life is one of the shining examples of liberal catholicism in eighteenth century Maharashtra.

Alam Khan (period unknown)

The exact period of this saint-poet is neither known for certain nor can it be surmised from any internal evidence. From the stories and legends that have grown round his personality all that can be said about it is that he was definitely one belonging to the middle ages. Alam Khan belonged to a place called Mahapur beyond the Vindhyas, perhaps in the present-day Madhya Pradesh. The youngest among four brothers he was everybody's favourite. While playing bows and arrows he accidentally hit the earthen pot being carried by his sister-in-law. He was frightened at; the same time the incident also triggered off his propensities for spiritualism. Neither the reassurances of his sister-in-law nor the importunities of his brothers who urged that a spiritual life can be led at home as well would satisfy him. He left his home town and migrated to the forest near Kalyani. A *jagirdar* of Kalyani named Ram had come hunting in that forest but was surrounded by his enemies and defeated. Alam Khan could not stand it. He used his bows and arrows to great effect and rescued Ram. A grateful Ram offered him a position in his court. Alam Khan initially declined but ultimately agreed to accompany Ram to Kalyani and to stay there for a while. During his stay there, finding a disciple full of potentialities, Waduml Siddha Nagnath (founder of Nageśa Samprādāya) gave him *darśan*. Alam went inside to bring a gift for his *guru* in token of his complete submission. Meanwhile the *guru* disappeared and the guards told him that none had come or gone. Realising the true nature of this miraculous appearance of his *guru* he went to Wodwal, his headquarters. While spending a night at the temple in that township he discovered that his main horse had disappeared. Regarding this as the *guru*'s order to give up worldly life Alam returned to Ram Jagirdar all that he had given him. Pleased with this and Alam Khan's *sādhanā* the *guru* ordered him to proceed to Jajar Mugli (in Osmanabad district bordering Karnataka and important for Nageśa Sampradāya). At Jajar Mugli his fame as a divine spread wide but the Qadiris of the Sufi sect who had been proselytising in the region did not like that their coreligionist should be the disciple of a Hindu saint and sing his songs. They severely criticised him whereupon Alam Khan told them that the pride in one's body should be shackled by one's conscience. To demonstrate, he heated some iron fetters and asked his critics to wear them. His critics turned round and challenged Alam to put them on. Alam Khan did so without any injury. This fire ordeal rebuffed the *pir-i-dastagirs* among the Sufis. But Alam Khan wanted no more of such incidents. He requested the villagers of Jagir Mugli for a piece of land for his burial. The villagers delayed matters, for they did not want to be separated from such a *yogi* so soon. Ultimately Alam Khan went to nearby Karale village (in Osmanabad district) and put an end to his life. Meanwhile the Mugli villagers were regretting that the saint had deserted them. They found snakes emerging in their village everywhere whereupon they prayed to the saint. A snake emerged from the Hanumān temple and vanished at the place where Alam Khan used to sit. They built there yet another token tomb. It would be no wonder if all these miraculous happenings gained Alam Khan quite a few disciples, but no names have come down to us. About fifteen of his compositions have survived and are available. In them he traces his spiritual progress and the steps towards self-realisation. He has composed an *āratī* in praise of his *guru* Nāgnāth. The *yogis* who live in this material world but are not of it are the objects of his immense admiration. His *samādhi* has not been appropriated by the Muslims be converted into a *dargah.*

Latif Shah (16th Century)

He is yet another saint-poet mentioned as a great devotee by poet Moropant in his *Sanmani Mala.* Moropant says that Latif was admired by Saint Tukārām himself. Latif himself refers to Kabir and Mīrābai in one of his compositions. It may be, therefore, inferred that he was a sixteenth century saint-poet. But no biographical details save the miracle described by poet Mahipati in his *Bhaktavijaya* are available so far. Although a born Muslim, Latif Shah was a devout Vaiṣṇava. He worshipped Lord Rāma, listened to the discourses on *Gîtā* and *Bhāgavata*, offered daily worship and showed great love for *kīrtans*. His coreligionists complained of this heretical conduct to the Muslim king who ordered that his *āśrama* be destroyed. But such was the spiritual power of Latif that those who came to destroy remained to pray. So the king himself set out to punish Latif and came to his *āśrama.* He noticed the clean, pleasant compound, the well-kept and well-swept mud flooring, fragrant flowers, a *tulsī* plant, the lime washed walls decorated with coloured illustrations of Hindu deities. An appreciative audience including those sent by the king was listening to

Latif Shah's recital of *Bhāgavata.* The furious king thundered at Latif: why is your Kṛṣṇa not eating the *pān* offered by Rādhā in this illustrations? Thereupon Latif prayed to the Lord to accept it and He did. The king became repentant and humbled. Such is the miracle reported by the eighteenth century poet Mahīpati who has specialised in recounting in graphic detail the miracles of the saints and the devotees of an earlier period in his *Bhakta-vijaya.* Of Latif's own compositions only three Hindi and one Marathi poem have been discovered so far. In a Hindi poem Latif mentions the previous devotees of Lord Rāma and says that he too is joining them in his own small way. Rāma and Kṛṣṇa are the deities he worships. He lashes out at hypocrisy and ritualistic religion. His sole surviving Marathi poem is a miltonic metaphor on objects of worship. Latif Shah's *dargāh* is at Mangalwedhe (in Solapur district), but his Muslim devotees have completely appropriated him.

Other Saint-Poets

There are quite a few Muslim saint-poets whose biographical details are lacking but whose poetry survives in lesser or greater bulk to speak for them. In some cases only the names have come down to us. Of them Bajid Pathan has been mentioned by poet Moropant in his *Sanmani Mala,* by poet Uddhav Chidghana and also by poet Mahipati (in his *Bhaktalilāmṛta*) who mentions some details. According to Mahipati, Bajid was a well-to-do Adilshahi officer with many sons, daughters and relatives. He was rich and successful. Once while returning home from a campaign, one of his camels overladen with treasure died on the way. Not knowing what death was, he ordered the camel-keeper to load it again and move on. When the camel would not get up there was a flash of realisation of the transitory nature of this world. Bajid left his home and sought spiritual guidance from saint Keśavasvāmī of Bhajanagar. His *guru* asked him to worship Lord Rāma and also inspired him to write religious poetry. Bajid composed nearly 500 Hindi poems and quite a few Marathi songs but used his *guru*'s name instead of his own. Consequently the nature of his poetry remains unknown. A few compositions of Keśavasvāmī in which the Svāmīji himself has been dealt with as a great *guru* could be perhaps Bajid's work. Keśavasvāmi's other Muslim disciples have been Shahbeg and Shakarganj who express their boundless devotion for their *guru* and supreme contempt for material life in their Hindi and Marathi compositions. Shah Navrang whose single song is available appears to be a disciple of Purnabodha Svāmī whose *guru*'s *guru* was Keśavasvāmī. Syed Husain alias Junglee Fakir was a disciple of Wadwal Siddha Nāgnāth, and a sort of *gurubandhu* of Alam Khan. His poetry is Puranic rather than religious recounting tales from the Purāṇas with his own embellishments. Shah Husain Fakir has been mentioned with respect by poet Moropant in his *Sanmani Mala*, and also by poet Uddhav Chidghana. But his only surviving compositions are twelve songs in Hindi and one in Marathi. In the Marathi song he describes Lord Kṛṣṇa's childhood very graphically. His Hindi compositions remind one of Surdās on the one hand and Kabir on the other. Syed Muhammad also sings of Lord Kṛṣṇa in his single available Marathi song, nothing is known of the Syed himself. (Could the song be a composition of Shaikh Muhammad Shrigondekar who was also a Syed?) Stray lines from Shaikh Sali Muhammad, which are of a mystic nature, have been discovered, but nothing more can be said about him or his poetry. Similar is the position of Saidu Lal, Banda Fakir, Burhan Shah whose stray, surviving compositions are tantalising and mystifying at the same time as we are completely in the dark about their personalities and the nature of their other works.

VII

In the context of our current, and perhaps continuous concern for national integration, the emergence of religious poets who were born in Islam but preached in terms of Hindu concepts, philosophy and ideology and expressed themselves in the language of the people present a very interesting phenomenon. Apparently medieval Maharashtrian society was divided and subdivided by innumerable castes and subcastes and a variety of sects and sub-sects. Nevertheless stabilising forces were alive and working in the great traditions of Hinduism and its popular derivative, the *bhakti* cult, whereby the society was held together. Integration flowed from the very nature of Hinduism which has no organised church and no set doctrine, which is not so much a religion as a way of life providing a broad perspective of looking at and experiencing all existence and beyond. Within its very vagueness and looseness was contained a very wide spectrum which could accommodate atheism and animism at the same time. Such a strong current of integrating forces could not but affect some individuals born as Muslims and inborn with strong religious urges and spiritual yearnings.

What is interesting to note, however, is that Islam in Maharashtra moulded itself, despite its doctrines, its mosques, its mullahs, to permit these saint-poets to live and to preach what in the eyes of the fundamentalists could be nothing but heresy. One might feel that not enough is known about their lives to advance definitive statements. But from the available facts it can be easily seen that these saint-poets were not ostracised, excommunicated or persecuted by the communities in which they lived for their beliefs and the expression of these beliefs in the tradition of earlier Marathi saint-poets. Undoubtedly the orthodox among the Muslim community castigated them in no uncertain terms and criticised them severely. But they do not appear to have gone to extremities in any case, despite the support which they could expect from the Muslim rulers of Maharashtra. The Muslim saint-poets did have their trials and tribulations no doubt, but they were not in the nature of severe religious oppression.

Not only that these saint-poets were not boycotted nor, tortured during their lifetime, but even after their death the Muslim communities undertook to look after and maintain their tombs and *dargahs*. observe their death and other anniversaries and make the usual offerings. This can perhaps be attributed to the fact that they felt that the divines, at least some of them, possessed certain spiritual powers which would influence them beneficially. But among the traditions that have come down to us there is no indication for such presumption. Shall we, therefore, attribute it, howsoever indirectly, to the liberalising catholic Hindu influences working on Islamic thought and culture?

The Muslim saint-poets indicate that notwithstanding the Islamic invasion of medieval Maharashtra a common corpus of religious values was growing and these poets contributed to that growth. They were not an isolated group voicing unusual doctrines and theories but formed part of the mainstream of Maharashtrian culture. Notwithstanding political subjugation, occasional religious oppression and forcible proselytising efforts of the Sufis and others the vitality of Hinduism in Maharashtra was not diminished or if so, only marginally. Islam could not make the same impact it made elsewhere and did not strike such deep roots in the soil as to sprout everywhere and engulf vast areas. Islam still remained an alien faith even to those born within it. And side by side existed Hindu divines and men of God who possessed powers that would attract men and women irrespective of their original caste and creed. The Muslim saint-poets born in this milieu preached what came to them naturally. They were basically sons of the soil who could not forsake their legacy and their heritage.

Shaikh Muhammad Shrigondekar is a typical example of the gradual growth of Maratha nationality in the religious context, which began to embrace people of all faiths and religious beliefs. He proclaimed that though he was an 'Avindha' (Muslim) his heart was full of Govinda (Lord Kṛṣṇa). In the manner of the Warkari saint-poets he felt compelled to criticise the evil social practices and empty religious rituals that he felt himself to be an integral, organic part of the Maharashtrian society he would not have felt and worked out such compulsions. In the religious context, of course he had realised the fundamental unity underlying the diversity of religious faiths. So had Shah Muntoji Bahamani who announced, "I, Shah Mutabaji (*sic*), Brahmani, recognise no differences; I have searched for *Pañcikaran* and (thereby) united the Hindus and the Muslims".

Finally we may conclude this longish essay by clarifying the term saint-poets or poet saints. Unlike Roman Catholicism there are no strict canons or criteria in the Hindu religion for canonisation of individuals. Those who observe all ethical norms, cherish and demonstrate moral values by their actions, are believed to possess certain spiritual powers, have been looked upon as saints. Their sainthood indicates the degree to which their spiritual attainments have brought them in reaching the goal of self-realisation and ultimate deliverance (*mokṣa*). In some cases certain miracles have been attributed to them by tradition, but this is not a decisive factor. In the history of Marathi literature a large number of poets who wrote religious poetry (but not Puranic verses) have been labelled as saint-poets, primarily for the sake of literary convenience, to distinguish them from poets who wrote in different styles. In respect of the major Muslim saint-poets they have been mentioned by later poets such as Mahipati and Moropant who have compiled biographical sketches of or references to saint-poets. Some other saint-poets have composed hymns in praise of them (e.g. saint Rāmadāsa's *āratī* on Shaikh Muhammad Shrigondekar). They have been rediscovered by modern Marathi researchers. Such light is yet to be shed on many more who might be lying in oblivion. In the present-day world, torn with dissensions and differences, the turmoil of violence, extremism and fundamentalism, it is good to remember and duty to pay our homage to those Marathi Muslim saint-poets who were steeped in humanism, perceived the basic unity in the apparent diversity of creeds and sects, practised highly ethical and spiritual lives and elevated those around them and quite a few of their descendants to a higher plane of existence through their preachings and living styles.

21

Vaiṣṇavism in Medieval Orissa

PRABHAT MUKHERJEE

The Eastern Gaṅgas came from Gaṅgavādī in Mysore and reigned in Kaliṅga for more than two centuries, before they conquered Orissa proper. The Gaṅgas of Kaliṅga professed Śaivism and Gokarṇeśvara on the Mahendragiri was their tutelary deity. In his early inscriptions Anantavarman Coḍagaṅga expressed his devotion to Śiva. Late in life he came under the influence of Vaiṣṇavism. His crowning achievement was the work he began on the eve of his life—the construction of the temple of Jagannātha. It is quite possible that Coḍagaṅga's enthusiasm was aroused, as he came into contact with some great personality. The first name which strikes us in this connection is that of Rāmānuja who visited Orissa between AD 1122 and 1137. At Puri, Rāmānuja established two *maṭhas* —one in his own name and the other in the name of his cousin and disciple Govinda. The temple of Lakṣmī within the temple precinct of Jagannātha was probably constructed as a result of Ramanuja's influence.

Tradition, however, records that Yayāti Keśarī built a pre-Gaṅga temple of Jagannātha. But if Yayāti Keśarī is identical with Mahāśivagupta Yayāti, who lived in the tenth century AD, then the existing temple was hardly old enough to deserve reconstruction. The Govindapur and Nagpur inscriptions of Lakṣmadeva seem to refer to an existing pre-Gaṅga temple of Jagannātha. It appears that perhaps on an incipient earlier structure "the magnificent assertion of autocratic devotion" was launched by Coḍagaṅga, and the work was continued in the reigns of his sons and was finished by Anaṅgabhīma II, the youngest of them. The date of the completion of the temple can be fixed up almost with precision which is AD 1197.

During the reign of Kapilendra (AD 1434-64) Jagannātha began to be honoured as the state-deity of Orissa. Jagannātha did not monopolise their attention, as these kings did not depend upon

Jagannātha's dispensation for their claims on the throne. But Kapilendra and his son Puruṣottama had that necessity, and thus there was a closer relation between the political head of the state and the state-deity. Kapilendra's inscriptions refer to his gifts to the Jagannātha temple, the temple-dancers and the regular recitation of Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda*.

It is difficult to determine when Jagannātha was first worshipped in Orissa. It appears that Bhagavatism flourished in Orissa in the fifth century AD when the older powerful tribal deities were identified with Vāsudeva and Saṅkarṣaṇa under the new nomenclature of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma respectively. The tribal, later Sanskritized, goddess Ekānaṃśā was identified with Subhadrā and completed the triad. The gradual absorption of heterogeneous attributes by Jagannātha had a great effect on the medieval Vaiṣṇavism of Orissa. Though Jagannātha was a Viṣṇuite deity, the form of his worship was materially affected as a result of Buddhist, Śaivite and tantric influence. He was conceived as Buddha, Śiva and even as the Bhairava. The preaching of Rāmānuja and the zeal displayed by Coḍagaṅga and his sons marked a turning point in the history of Vaiṣṇavism. Jagannātha was rehabilitated as a Viṣṇuite deity, but the non-Viṣṇuite elements in his worship were not rejected.

On the eve of the Caitanya age, there was a transitional stage in the field of the existing religious systems. The concept of the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu gained ground. In the *Gaṅga-Vamśānucarita* of Vāsudeva Rath, king Narasiṃha I has been described as the incarnation of Man-Lion. The temple of Kūrma at Śrī-Kūrmam testifies the popularity of the *avatāra* concept. Kāśi Miśra, the preceptor of Pratāparudra erected a Varāha temple at Jajpur. Madhva's Dvaita doctrine became popular among the Vaiṣṇava thinkers. The popularity of Śaivism is also attested by the Bhuvaneshwar group of temples. Śāktism had also a strong ground. Apart from the well known Vimalā, the goddess Virajā of Jajpur was already famous by the fourteenth century, and she has been extolled by Sāralā Dāsa. The latter is said to have received inspiration from Sāraḷā Caṇḍī of Jhankad. Relics of Buddhism were still found. The Buddhist monks lived in the rock-cut caves, but were looked down as 'unbelievers in the Vedas'. The Oriya tradition refers to the following Siddhācāryas: Hāḍipā, Kanhupā, Tāntipā Cauraṅgīnātha, Gorakṣanātha, Matsyendranātha and Luipā. They were exponents of Nāthism which had also votaries in Orissa.

Before the advent of Caitanya, Kṛṣṇa was seldom conceived as the supreme and absolute being in Orissa. Kṛṣṇa as Gopāla was worshipped through the feelings of affection and companionship. On his way to Purī, Caitanya visited the temple of Sākṣī-Gopāla, and Nityānanda narrated the story of the image before the Master. Mādhavendra Purī, the preceptor of Caitanya's *guru* Īśvara Purī, was an ardent devotee of Gopāla. At Remuna, near Balasore, he did obeisance to the image of Gopīnātha. Legends about Gopīnātha are collected in Vinod-Caitanya Bābāji's *Gopīnāthacaritāmṛta.* Viṣṇu, 'favourite of the Gopāla clan', has been mentioned in the Megheśvara temple inscription. The copperplate grant of king Puruṣottama in favour of Poteśvara Bhaṭṭa shows that the king sought for the benediction of Madana Gopāla. All these show the popularity of the Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa concept in medieval Orissa. Jagannātha's dress as Bāla Gopāla fascinated the Master. He recited a *śloka* in honour of Jagannātha conceived as Gopāla. During the Hira-Pañcamī festival Jagannātha is regarded as Kṛṣṇa, the young cowherd. It is said that Jagannātha-Kṛṣṇa longs at that time for the disport of Vṛndāvana. So he repairs to the Guṇḍicā house, which resembles the abode of the *gopīs*.

Mādhavendra was the precursor of Caitanya in the service of Kṛṣṇa through conjugal passion. Before him, the consort-mode of devotion was unknown also in Bengal. The underlying idea of this mode of devotion is that Kṛṣṇa alone is the object of devotion and the mode of service through conjugal love by which damsels of Vraja adored him is the only true form of service. The *gopīs* share between themselves Kṛṣṇa's passion as the lover. The quintessence of love is the supreme emotion (*mahābhāva*) of which Rādhā is the embodiment.

The Rādhā idea came to Orissa from the north and not from the south. The concept of Rādhā has been given a prominent place in the teachings of Nimbārka. He was a Telugu but he settled at Vṛndāvana. The Rādhā idea was perfected, perhaps for the first time in *Gītagovinda* of Jayadeva who lived in the twelfth century. Rāmānanda Rāya quoted from this book before the Master to show the superiority of Rādhā over other *gopīs.* Rāmānanda studied the songs of Vidyāpati and also the *Śrī Kṛṣṇakīrtana* of (Baḍu) Caṇḍīdāsa. In the *māthur* songs of Vidyāpati, Rādhā turns herself into Mādhava (Kṛṣṇa) due to constant thought of him. It has been said that Rādhā herself descended into this world as the embodiment of separation from Kṛṣṇa (*Vipralambha-vigraha*). The Rādhā idea spread in Orissa due to the influence and teaching of Caitanya. Formerly it was not popular in Orissa, though the *Gītagovinda* was recited before Jagannātha at the time of *bara-siṅgāra* ceremony.

From the biographies of Caitanya it is known that immediately after his initiation as a monk he made a tour in southern India as far as Rāmeśvaram. Then he decided to stay at Nīlācala or Puri. He stayed for sometime as a guest of Sārvabhauma, an erudite scholar in Vedānta, who became his disciple after a learned disputation which took place for seven days (AD 1510). From Puri he went to Rajamahendrī where the governor Rāmānanda Rāya a reputed scholar and much honoured Vaiṣṇava devotee, became his disciple. Then after visiting different holy places of southern and western India, Caitanya returned to Puri in 1512. From a letter of Rāmānanda Rāya, Pratāparudra, the Gajapati King of Orissa, was informed of the activities of Caitanya. He met him and paid homage to him. From 1516 till his death in 1533 Caitanya never left Puri.

Caitanya considered Lord Jagannātha to be Kṛṣṇa himself. Whenever he saw the deity he imagined him to be Kṛṣṇa at Kurukṣetra. At the same time Caitanya was believed to be the living (*sacala*) embodiment of Jagannātha. In the Oriya *Caitanya-bhāgavata* of Īśvaradāsa it has been stated that Gaurāṅga (Caitanya) is Jagannātha himself. In the same text he has also been described as Buddha's incarnation. Kavikarṇapura writes that the Master spent 20 years out of his ascetic life of 24 years at Śrīkṣetra (Puri). The congregation of the devotees of Caitanya at Puri consisted of all Vaiṣṇavas, irrespective of sectarian distinctions, who chanted the name of Hari. *Kīrtana*, especially before the chariot of Jagannātha had an emotional appeal to all Oriya Vaiṣṇavas. His god-dedicated personality and his devotional fervour at the sight of Jagannātha, impressed the Vaiṣṇavas of Orissa who took him to be the embodiment of Jagannātha. It was also believed that Caitanya was an accomplished scholar who had authoritative knowledge of the scriptures.

Acyutānanda writes that the five associates (*pañcasakhā*,—Jagannātha, Balarāma, Acyutānanda, Yaśovanta and Ananta) participated in the *kīrtana* processions of Caitanya, the last four being non-Brāhmaṇas. The word *sakhā* had a theoretical implication. In

Orissa and Bengal, the disciples of Caitanya were conceived as associates (*gaṇa*) of Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana—'an extremely logical development of the Vaiṣṇava theory of incarnation which regards not only Caitanya as Kṛṣṇa, but also his followers as Kṛṣṇa's associates and beloved ones'. These five *sakhās* of Caitanya in the Kaliyuga were supposed to have impersonated the five companions of Kṛṣṇa in Dvāparayuga who were Dāma, Sudāmā, Śrīvasta, Suvala and Subāhu. According to Acyutānanda, 12,000 followers including the *Pañca-sakhā* participated in the *kīrtana* processions of the Master. In *Caurāśī-ājñā* we find Caitanya seated in the Mukti Maṇḍapa of the Jagannātha temple along with these five comrades, the king and Sārvabhauma. Among these five comrades Balarāma Dāsa was the oldest. He lives in the memory of the people as the author of the Oriya *Rāmāyaṇa*. He was a Karaṇa by caste and fought for the rights of the Śūdras. In his *Vedāntasāraguptagītā* he wrote that the Brāhmaṇas resented his participation in the discussion regarding Vedānta in the Mukti Maṇḍapa of the Jagannātha temple. Balarāma's chief seat was the Gandharva-*maṭha* on the mouth of the Banki river in Purī. According to Īśvara Dāsa, Balarāma had a vision that the Lord would incarnate again and that he would go to Nīlācala in the robes of a monk. Jagannātha Dāsa is famous for his Oriya translation of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. He was a reciter of the Purāṇa in the Jagannātha temple. According to Divākara, Caitanya gave him the epithet *ati-baḍa* (very big) for his piety and bearing. He founded the Ati-Baḍa sect. His chief seat is now called 'Baḍa-Oriya' *maṭha*. The third comrade Yeśovanta belonged to the Mahanāyaka caste. He is remembered for his work *Govindacandraṭikā* which is now recited by the mendicants of the Nātha sect. Acyutānanda Mohānti was the patron-saint of the cowherd caste. His works *Śūnyasamhitā* and the *Anākārasamhitā* deal with the theory of void. He heard an oracle telling him to serve Caitanya. Forthwith he repaired to Puri and bowed at the feet of the Master. Ananta Mahāpatra founded the Sisu sect. His seat is at Tentuliapāḍā in the Cuttack district. He met Caitanya while he was resting at Konaraka on his way to Puri.

The important Oriya followers of Caitanya other than the five comrades were the followers who accepted the Caitanya faith, the priests of the Jagannātha temple and other officers who were ordered by the king to attend the master, and Pratāparudra, the king himself. Among the followers, the most prominent was Rāmānanda Rāya who was a celebrated devotional poet and dramatist as well. During his religious discourse with Caitanya at Rajamahendri he became his devotee. His greatest contribution to the doctrine of the Caitanya faith was his delineation of *gopībhāva.* This idea he got from the south. The next important follower of Caitanya was Mādhavī Dāsī. She was a cousin of Rāmānanda. She was a gifted writer. In the anthology, *Padakalpataru* her five poems have been incorporated. Her poem 'Jagadananda Comes from Nīlācala to Console Sacī' reveals the agony of the aged mother of the Master, whose only surviving son renounced the world. Gopāla Guru when he was a boy served the Master in the house of Kāśi Miśra. He had initiation from Vakreśvara Paṇḍita. Kanci Khuntia, Kāśi Miśra, Mādhava Paṭṭanāyaka, Māmu Ṭhākura, Paramānanda Mahāpātra, Pradumnya Miśra, Śaṅkara Paṇḍita, Sikhi Mohānti, Svapneśvara, and Tulasī Miśra were important followers of Caitanya.

It is stated in the Sanskrit and Bengali biographies of Caitanya that king Pratāparudra was patron of the Caitanya faith. Vṛndāvana Dāsa has given an embellished account of Pratāparudra's devotion to Caitanya. He always met the Master whenever he came to Puri. He ordered the Jagannātha temple priests to carry out the wishes of the Master. He ordered the royal officials to arrange accommodation for Caitanya and his party during his journey to Bengal and to 'wait on him, day and night'. He also participated in the *nandotsava* festivals in which Caitanya took part. Even before he accepted the Caitanya faith Prātaparudra was well-read in Vaiṣṇava theology. He quoted appropriate passages from the *Bhāgavata* when he first met Caitanya which weie appreciated by the Master. The companions of Caitanya also received royal patronage. Notwithstanding all these it is difficult to say whether Pratāparudra was an actual convert to the Caitanya faith. Prejudiced historians without a critical examination of facts have very often accused Pratāparudra on the ground that his 'adiction' to the religion of love made him indifferent and callous in regard to the security of the state which eventually called forth Muslim invasions in Orissa. But they ignore the basic fact that other Hindu states of India, with non-Vaiṣṇava rulers, were also conquered by the Muslims. As S.K. De has rightly remarked: "As a man of devout inclinations, he [Pratāparudra] was probably impressed by the religious personality of Caitanya and paid a willing homage, but beyond this, there is no evidence of

Pratāparudra's actual conversion."

R.D. Banerji's theory that the acceptance of Vaiṣṇavism was the real cause of the Muslim conquest of Orissa twenty-eight years after the death of Pratāparudra is evidently fallacious. Equally fallacious is the view of some recent writers that the Rādhā Kṛṣṇa cult which Caitanya universalised in Orissa did eternal harm to the nation's character, training and social morals. Such views reveal the lack of understanding even the basic canons of historical criticism. Caitanya did not preach any new religion in Orissa. He only revitalized the tenets which were already existing and took them to the caste and class-ridden masses which brought a new meaning of life to them. In coastal Orissa, most of the Brāhmaṇas were opposed to Caitanyaism, though some of them took the Vaiṣṇava surname *dāsa*. Caitanya came to Orissa at a time when the non-Brāhmaṇas challenged the monopoly of the Brāhmaṇas in intellectual pursuits. Rāmānanda Rāya, the most prominent follower of Caitanya in Orissa was a non-Brāhmaṇa. Four among the five Orissan *sakhās* or comrades of Caitanya were non-Brāhmaṇas. Two non-Brāhmaṇas, Śyāmānanda and Rasika Murārī, spread the Caitanya faith in Orissa in the seventeenth century. Baladeva Vidyabhuṣana, another non-Brāhmaṇa, was the greatest exponent of the dogmas of the faith in the eighteenth century. The Oriya Brāhmaṇas did not like the Caitanya movement dominated by the Śūdras. More than a century ago, Hunter wrote:

> The adoration of Caitanya has become a sort of family worship throughout Orissa .... The worship of Caitanya extends throughout Orissa and I have a long list of landed families who worship him with daily rituals in household chapels, dedicated tc his name. At this moment, Caitanya is the apostle of the common people in Orissa. The Brāhmaṇas, unless they happen to enjoy grants of lands, in his name, ignore his work. In almost every Brāhmaṇa village, the communal shrine is dedicated to Siva, but in the villages of ordinary husbandmen, it is Viṣṇu who is worshipped and Caitanya is remembered as the great teacher of the proletarian faith.

So far as the philosophy of the medieval school of Vaiṣṇavism in Orissa is concerned, there are a few tenets which make a difference with Gauḍīya (Bengal) as well as the southern forms of

Vaiṣṇavism. These tenets are of heterogeneous origin on which even Buddhist influence may be discerned. The spirit of the supreme being (*Puruṣa*), immanent in the void, is conceived as the void-personified (*Ālekh Puruṣa*). Also known as *Śūnya-Puruṣa*, the concept thus corresponds on the one hand with the Vedantic concept of *nirguṇa brahman* and on the other with the Buddhist concept of *śūnyatā* or vacuity. When *Alekh-Anakāra* (unformed) assumes form, it is known as the formless Viṣṇu. *Nirākāra* is the creative aspect of *Anakāra* or the unformed absolute being. It is also known as Mahāviṣṇu, Virāṭa Puruṣa, Ādi Brahman, etc. Vindu or material potency is dropped from the Void. When Śakti or energy longs to create it becomes massive (*ghanībhūta*) and appears as *bindu*. It is conceived as the generative element as well as the female principle. Like the potential and movable energies these two are but the two faces of the same reality, symbolised by Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. The love-fluid of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa is *prema-rūpa* manifested in the eternal *rasa* exploit.

Apart from the influence of the Vedantic concept of *Brahman* and its *śakti* or the Buddhist concept of *śūnyatā* and *karuṇā* (*prajñā* and *upāya*), Tantric influence is also there in Orissa Vaiṣṇavism which is indicated by the theory of thirty-two letters. First comes *Alekh*, the absolute, inexpressible by the letters (*anākṣara*). From the effulgence is caused *vindu-brahma* which along with *ardhamātrā* form *om* or *ekākṣara* or single-letter. It is duplicated into *ra* and *ma*, denoting Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa respectively. Their love-ardour gives birth to *premarūpā* or *candrāvali*. These three principles when doubled represent six corners of the eternal *rasa* arena symbolised by six angles known as Subhadrā, Raṅgadevī, Lilāvatī, Priyāvatī, Vṛndāvatī and Ratnarekhā. The six angles are subsequently expanded into eight angles of sixteen letters presided over by eight *gopīs*. Their further multiplication with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in the eternal *rāsalīlā* explain the symbolism of thirty-two letters. This is how the tantric symbolism of letters has been brought in relation to the Caitanyite concept of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa communion.

The Yogic concepts have also influenced the philosophy of medieval Vaiṣṇavism in Orissa. According to this theory, the universe (*brahmāṇḍa*) may be identified with the body (*piṇḍa*). That is why, for salvation *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* is necessary. There are fifty airs in the body and six limbs known as six *cakras*. Air from these limbs should be forced towards *suṣumnā*, the nerve channel. *Suṣumnā* along with channels *iḍā* and *piṅgalā* form the *triveṇī*. The usual techniques of *kāya-sādhana* or disciplining of body and mind have been described quite in accordance with those of the other traditions.

Unfortunately there is no clear-cut exposition of the philosophy of the medieval school of Orissa Vaiṣṇavism. Contradictory statements make the situation embarrassing and textual corruptions add more to the difficulties. The reason for this drawback lies in the nature of medieval Vaiṣṇavism in Orissa itself. Theories were freely but unsystematically taken from other sects and absorbed. New interpretations have been given to the borrowed ideas so as to make them acceptable to all. But in doing so the question of logical consistency has been ignored.

22

Śaṅkaradeva and Assam Vaiṣṇavism

SATYENDRANATH SARMA

Background

Assam, known as Kāmarūpa in ancient times, witnessed a tremendous Vaiṣṇavite revival in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of the Christian era. The movement was initiated by Śaṅkaradeva, a man of versatile genius, in the last decade of the fifteenth century and gained strength and momentum in the succeeding two centuries. Before proceeding to unfold its history and characteristics it would be pertinent to trace its background. Assam in the fifteenth century was inhabited by heterogeneous elements of people speaking different languages and dialects and following diverse shades of cultural life. Although Assamese, and Indo-Aryan language, emerged as the most powerful medium of expression by the beginning of the thirteenth century, majority of the people belonged to the Indo-Mongoloid race; some of them followed their tribal customs and professed traditional religious beliefs. Politically the land was divided into several kingdoms indulging in constant friction and conflict for supremacy. The political instability contributed towards the creation of chaotic conditions in the social sphere. The tantric form of worship was highly popular with the people, who being allured by the outward attractions of the cult were practising it with gruesome rites. Śaivism, Vāsudevaism (a form of tantric Vaiṣṇavism) and Śāktism were the dominant cults besides a few other minor cults like Nāthaism, crypto-Buddhism and the cult of Manasā, the snake goddess. It may be mentioned in this connection that almost all the religious cults noted above were practised according to the tantric rites, accompanied by animal sacrifices and some of them prescribed practices of extreme leftism such as *pañca-makāras* for their votaries. The monotheistic belief in God, though not unknown, receded to the background, giving precedence to the belief in many gods who were worshipped for worldly happiness and gains and not for liberation from the worldly bondage. The medieval *charitras* or hagiographical works on the lives of the Vaiṣṇavite preachers and saints and some of the religious works of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries throw sufficient light on the confused and somewhat chaotic state of religious life during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries of the Christian era.[1]

It must not, however, be inferred from the above that the pantheistic belief and the monotheistic doctrine as propounded by the Upaniṣads and the *Gītā* were not quite alien to the people of Assam. In fact, the Vedic religion accompanied by *Varṇāśrama dharma* was introduced in Assam in the early centuries of the Christian era and successive waves of Aryan migration from the midland and north India reinforced the process of Aryanization in Assam. But Assam, being predominantly inhabited by non-Aryan indigenous people, the Upaniṣadic concept of God was lost sight of and the Purāṇic polytheism blended with indigenous beliefs and tantric practices began to gain increasing popularity with masses.

The cult of monotheistic *bhakti* which the neo-Vaiṣṇavite reformers brought to the forefront was also not unfamiliar to a section of people. This is evident from the writings of the pre-Śaṅkarite poets like Hemasarasvatī, Harivara Vipra and Mādhava Kandali who flourished in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries of the Christian era. Lines like *Mādhavese gatimati, Mādhavese prāṇ, Mādhavata pare jānā bandhu nāhi ān* by Hemasarasvatī clearly echoes the monotheistic *bhakti* concept of the neo-Vaiṣṇavite poets of the succeeding centuries. Translations of the entire *Rāmāyaṇa* with a Vaiṣṇavite stamp by Mādhava Kandali in the middle of the fourteenth century and adaptations of a few *Mahābhārata* episodes into narrative *kāvyas* by the pre-Śaṅkaradeva poets prescribing devotion as the only way of releasing oneself from the bondage of the world bear testimony to the existence of a thin current of the devotional Vaiṣṇavism in Assam.

The highly ritualistic and priest-ridden complex religious rites of the Brahmanical religion were not considered suitable for the majority of the people who belonged to the non-Aryan ethnic groups with little or no knowledge of Sanskrit language in which the Hindu rites were conducted. Śaṅkaradeva, therefore, considered it desirable to evolve a religion which would not only be simpler in form but also easily practisable by all sections of people irrespective of their caste, social position and educational attainment. The monotheistic *bhakti* cult with emphasis on *śravaṇa* (hearing or listening), *kīrtana* (singing or reciting) and *smaraṇa* (remembering) of the names of the adorable Lord was found suitable to satisfy the needs of the times. Śaṅkaradeva, therefore, embarked on the arduous expeditions of reorienting the religious life of the people of Assam on the basis of the monotheistic *bhakti* cult propounded in the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* and the *Gītā*. They substituted the unintelligible Sanskrit versions of the religious scriptures by easily understandable Assamese versions of important religious works including the two great epics and some Vaiṣṇavite Purāṇas. But before we discuss the important characteristics of the Vaiṣṇava faith and movement and its literature, initiated by Śaṅkaradeva, it would be worthwhile to give a life-sketch of the initiator, Śrī Śaṅkaradeva.

Śaṅkaradeva was born in the middle of the fifteenth century at Ālipukhuri near present Bardowā in the modern district of Nowgong in central Assam. The earlier biographies of the saint composed in the seventeenth century have not mentioned the date of his birth. Daityāri Ṭhākur, one of the earliest reliable biographers who composed his work in *c.* AD 1620 has clearly mentioned the date of his demise as AD 1568 (Śaka 1490). His contemporary biographer Bhūṣana Dvija, however, has not mentioned any date or year of his birth or death. But the later biographers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have mostly recorded AD 1449 (Śaka 1371) as the year of his birth. Another biographer of the eighteenth century, viz., Aniruddha Dāsa gives AD 1463 (Śaka 1385) as the year of Śaṅkaradeva's birth. Edward Gait in the *History of Assam* says that the date of his birth "is possibly thirty or forty years too early."[2] A close perusal of the internal evidences furnished by the biographers leave some scope to doubt the authenticity of the earlier date, e.g., AD 1449, but there is scarcely any doubt about the year of his departure from the mundane world. The Vaiṣṇavite tradition, however, accepts unreservedly Śaka 1371 (AD 1449) as the birth-year of the great reformer. For want of any definite evidence to the contrary, the traditional date, widely recognised by the people for the last two hundred years, has also been accepted by some modern scholars.[3] If the earlier year of his birth is accepted, then it must be granted that Śaṅkaradeva lived for 119 years, certainly a long span of life for a human being. Considering the robust health, the regulated and disciplined life and balanced mental disposition of the saint it is not unlikely that he lived for nearly 120 years, the span of life generally attributed to *mahāpuruṣas.*

He was fifth in descent from Caṇḍīvara who migrated to Kāmarūpa during the middle of fourteenth century from Gauḍadeśa (modern Bengal) and settled in central Assam as the head of Bhūyāns (landholders). Śaṅkaradeva's father was Kusumvara, a local chief of considerable power and affluence, but unfortunately both Kusumvara and his wife Satyasandhā, mother of Śaṅkaradeva, died during the childhood of the great saint. His grandmother, therefore, looked after his upbringing and welfare. He was thoroughly educated in Sanskrit learning and in due course settled down as a householder. Strong in built, extremely handsome, deeply learned, pursuasive in speech, innately religious in outlook Śaṅkaradeva attained in course of time, an extraordinary attractive personality which stood him in great stead in winning over people of all strata of society.

At the death of his first wife, his innate religious propensity, so long dormant, found an opportunity to come to the surface. Approximately at the age of thirty, accompanied by a few companions he set out for a long course of pilgrimage and visited almost all the holy places of India from Kanyākumārī to Badarikāśrama. All those who accompanied him turned back from Puri and did not proceed further. The rest of his long journey was undertaken alone and for twelve years he moved from place to place meeting religious saints and scholars and observing religious trends in different parts of the country. He must have been deeply impressed by the nature and working of the neo-Vaiṣṇavite movements initiated by his predecessors like Rāmānuja, Nimbārkācārya, Madhvācārya, Rāmānanda and Kabir in different regions of medieval India. Śaṅkaradeva's reference to the popularity of songs of Kabir in Varanasi and Puri in his work *Kīrtanaghoṣā* bespeak of his contact with religious movements that were gaining popularity at that time.[4]

It is not unlikely that Śaṅkaradeva might have received spiritual initiation from some Vaiṣṇava saint at Puri where he spent more than a year. Curiously enough he has maintained complete silence about the identity of his spiritual guide, although he has not failed to pay obeisance to his *guru* in the opening lines of some of his poetical compositions.[5] Aniruddha Kāyastha, who composed the fifth canto of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* in the seventeenth century says that Śaṅkaradeva received spiritual initiation at Puri and obtained religious orders (*ājñā*) to propagate Vaiṣṇavism.[6] Biographers of Śaṅkaradeva uniformly say that it was Jagadīśa Miśra who at the behest of the Lord of Jagannātha-kṣetra hastened to Assam to handover a copy of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* with the commentary of Śrīdharasvāmī to Śaṅkaradeva at Bardowā. Aniruddha Kāyastha's statement, when interpreted in the context of his receiving the copy of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, leads one to conclude that Śaṅkaradeva, most probably, was initiated to the path of devotion at Puri where he is said to have stayed for a considerable part of the period of pilgrimage.

After his return from his long pilgrimage and having obtained a copy of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* with Śrīdharasvāmī's commentary Śaṅkaradeva set himself seriously to the task of propagating the new faith of devotion based on the teachings of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* and the *Gitā.* Having transferred the office of the Śiromaṇi Bhūyān (chief of the Bhūyān) to one of the cousins, Śaṅkaradeva managed to procure a band of faithful followers to the new faith, with whose help he constructed a spacious *devagṛha* where prayers and religious discourses were regularly held. The first spectacular step for attracting people and popularising the cult was taken through a pantomimic show known as *cihnayātrā* which was enacted against backdrop of painted scenes of the seven Vaikuṇthas or heavenly abodes with a presiding Viṣṇu over each. The show presented the dancing and singing heavenly denizens in appropriate costumes. Śaṅkaradeva himself painted the scenes of the seven celestial regions, directed the music and dance and himself appeared in some vital roles of the show. This theatrical show highly impressed the audience and those who had been sceptical till then of his new role as a preacher, were now convinced of his extraordinary genius.

The new faith and the movement did not take a definite shape till the receipt of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* with Śrīdhara's commentary. The possession of the copy of the *Purāna* through the agency of Jagadīśa Miśra not only helped him to give a clear and definite shape to his faith of Bhāgavatism, but also enabled him to render the original texts of the said Purāṇa into lucid Assamese verses. Daityāri Ṭhākur, one of the earliest biographers of the saint, narrates this event in the following way:

Śaṅkaradeva listened with rapt attention to the exposition of

> the *Bnāgavata-purāṇa* by Jagadiśa Miśra and realised the importance of the *Bhāgavata* as a scripture without a parallel. It was the only scripture that determined Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa as the only adorable deity, the chanting and meditation of *nāma* as the real *dharma* and single-minded devotion (*aikāntika bhakti*) and holy association (*sat-saṅga*) as indispensable elements of the faith.[7]

The cult is further reinforced by the teachings of the *Bhagavad-gītā* which enjoins complete self-surrender to God. It has been announced by Śaṅkaradeva that a true Vaiṣṇava should not worship any other God but Viṣṇu, must not enter into any temple other than that of Viṣṇu, nor should he partake of the offerings made to any other God.[8]

When the movement was gradually gaining momentum in his native place at Bardowā it received a temporary setback on account of a clash between the Bhuyāns and the Kāchārīs, a non-Aryan tribe of central Assam. The Bhuyāns, being numerically weak, were forced to abandon their native place and having crossed the Brahmaputra settled at Gāngmukh on the north bank. They were at this place hardly for five years when frequent raids from the new Koch power and the Bhutanese forced them to move further east and they finally settled themselves at Dhuahat within the territorial jurisdiction of the Ahom kings.

Here, at Dhuahat, Śaṅkaradeva started his proselytising activities in right earnest and within a brief period gained a large number of adherents. The simplicity and purity of the new cult in contrast to the sacerdotal or the ritual-dominated Brahmanical cult was the prime factor in attracting the unsophisticated masses to the new faith. The portal of this simple Vaiṣṇavite faith was kept wide open for all castes and communities and no discrimination was made on the basis of caste or status while conferring initiation or ordaining disciples. The Brāhmana and the untouchable were to be treated alike. Because of this generous approach the number of disciples began to increase gradually which, in turn greatly alarmed the priestly class. It began to offer open hostility by abusing and molesting some of the followers of Śaṅkaradeva. Although Śaṅkaradeva silenced his opponents in a religious disputation, their hostility did not cease. They even approached the reigning Ahom monarch with the allegation that Śaṅkaradeva had preached heretical doctrines among the masses. But the Ahom king, not being Hinduised till then, did not deem it necessary to interfere in religious matters of the Hindus and therefore acquitted the saint.

The most important achievement of Śaṅkaradeva in Dhuahat was the acquisition of Mādhavadeva to his fold, who after his conversion from the Śākta faith proved himself to be his ablest and the most faithful disciple. Mādhava's unflinching devotion and deep allegiance to his *guru*, ultimately, prompted the latter to nominate him to be his successor as the head of the Vaisṇavite community. Like Guru Nanak who, instead of nominating any of his relatives, selected Angad to succeed him, Śaṅkaradeva, too nominated his most faithful and efficient disciple Mādhava, to succeed him after his demise. Mādhava was originally a staunch Śākta, but being convinced of the superiority of the path of devotion and loving faith in a religious dispute, finally accepted Śaṅkaradeva as his spiritual guide. Mādhava was a scholar, a poet, an efficient organiser and a fine musician. This unique combination of two extraordinary persons gave a renewed momentum to the progress of Vaiṣṇavism in Assam.

While at Dhuahat, the Bhuyāns were engaged by the Ahom King Chuhungmung (1497-1539) in catching wild elephants for the royal stable. Due to the negligence of the Bhuyāns no wild elephant could be captured for which the entire community of Bhuyān who were mostly related to Śaṅkaradeva, was taken to task. Some of the Bhuyāns including Hari Bhuyān, son-in-law of Śaṅkaradeva, and Mādhavadeva were arrested. Hari Bhuyān was killed and Mādhava was ultimately released. This unreasonably hostile attitude of the Ahom monarch embittered Śaṅkara's mind. He considered the Ahom territory unsafe for the propagation of his cult. Western Assam, ruled by the Koch king Naranārāyaṇa who was known to be an enlightened monarch, was thought to be a better resort by Śaṅkaradeva and his relatives. Taking advantage of the Koch invasion of the Ahom territory in 1546, Śaṅkaradeva and his followers migrated to western Assam. They settled temporarily at different places like Kapalābāri, Chaparā, Chunparā and finally the saint-reformer established himself at Pātbāusi, near Barpeta.

Thus, the third phase of his life commenced with his entry into the Koch kingdom. Here, in Kāmrūpa, Nārāyaṇa Ṭhākur, one of the most important resourceful disciples, was initiated to the new faith. Nārāyaṇa Ṭhākur's original name was Bhavānanda. He was a well-to-do merchant. He was baptised as Nārāyaṇa Ṭhākur by Śaṅkaradeva after his initiation ceremony. This resourceful and devoted follower was instrumental in bringing a large number of people to the religious fold of his *guru* and also considerably helped in augmenting the material resources of the religious establishment of Śaṅkaradeva. At Pātbāusi, the prayer hall (*nāmaghar*) and the shrine having been constructed, regular religious discussion and discourse, prayer services, recitation of the holy texts, dramatic performances, were constantly held. Having permanently settled at Pātbāusi Śaṅkaradeva, accompanied by 120 followers went on his second pilgrimage as far as Puri. It is narrated in the biographies that he met Caitanyadeva at Puri and on his way to Puri visited the *maṭha* of Kabir where he met the grand-daughter of the latter. The biographer's statement of the meeting with Caitanya of Bengal cannot be accepted as the saint of Bengal expired in AD 1533, whereas Śaṅkara's second pilgrimage took place around AD 1550. As Patbāusi, Dāmodaradeva, Harideva and Ananta Kandalī, the three principal Brāhmaṇa associates of Śaṅkaradeva, embraced Vaiṣṇavism under the religious inspiration of the Master. The acquisition of these influential Brāhmaṇas helped him to enlist the sympathy and cooperation of the section of Brāhmaṇas who had so long, as a class, remained somewhat averse to the creed of Śaṅkara. Even then, there was no dearth of people who brought allegations against him and his followers in the court of the Koch king Naranārāyaṇa (AD 1540-85) that he was preaching and propagating a faith contrary to the traditional Hindu religion. The king ordered his arrest, but the timely warning of prince Śukladhvaja who had married in the family of Śaṅkara enabled the latter to escape. Through the good office of prince Śukladhvaja, Śaṅkara was summoned to the court with the assurance that no physical harm would be done to him. He appeared in the royal court, recited a self-composed royal panegyric and a devotional Sanskrit prayer in praise of the Lord. The king was highly impressed by his imposing personality and the scholarly achievements of the saint. Śaṅkara convincingly established the truth and superiority of his faith in the learned assembly of the court. The king, highly pleased with his saintly behaviour, profound learning and dignified appearance rewarded him with rich presents and assured him safety in the free propagation of his creed. During the last few years of his life he had to keep liasion with the Koch court which indirectly helped his religion. At the request of prince Śukladhvaja he designed and directed the weaving of a place of cloth, forty yards in length, depicting Vṛndāvana-sports of Kṛṣṇa. This embroidered cloth depicting the early life of Gopāla Kṛṣṇa was presented to king. The latter expressed his desire to be initiated by Śaṅkara to Vaiṣṇavism, but the saint knowing how difficult it would be for a king to observe strictly the conduct of a true Vaiṣṇava tried to avoid it by deferring the date of initiation. But to save him, as it were from that unpleasant position, a fatal boil appeared in some part of his body which caused his death in the month of Bhādra (August-September) of Śaka 1940.

His Personality

Biographers uniformly speak of the great physical strength, beauty and charm of the saint-reformer. Mādhavadeva in a song in which he paid his obeisance to his *guru* describes the saint's physical charm in the following way:

> He is handsome to look. His fair body shines like the refulgent sun. His very sight, pleasing to the assembly of people, can remove and destroy sin. He is naturally handsome without the aid of ornaments and decorations. He is dignified, majestic in appearance and wise. His lotus-like eyes are wide and bright and his complexion is pleasant like the rays of the moon. His gait is dignified like that of an elephant and his voice is deep like the rumbling of a cloud.[9]

The above description of the Vaiṣṇavite saint by his most favourite disciple, even shorn of its poetic embellishment, leaves no doubt about the personal beauty and charm of the Master. All biographers speak of his robust health and extraordinary physical strength. It is believed that he could swim across the Brahmaputra during the rainy season and could tame a ferocious bull by holding it by horns.

A scholar without arrogance, a steadfast pursuer of his ideals, persuasive in arguments, humanistic in outlook, a householder without worldly attachment, a staunch believer in monotheism who did not hesitate to expel his favourite disciple to maintain the purity of his cult, an astute organiser of social reform, a versatile artist and poet, a successful religious discourser who could enliven his talk with appropriate stories, parables and humour, a man of deep foresight, Śaṅkaradeva was appropriately considered by his followers to be an incarnation of the Divine.

Religious Teachings

The religion of love and devotion preached by Śaṅkaradeva and his followers was not a new religion. It was embedded in the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, the *Gītā* and some other Vaiṣṇavite works like *Nārada Bhakti-sūtra* and *Śāṇḍilya Bhakti-sūtra*. Credit goes to Śaṅkaradeva for adapting that religion to the need of the people and for democratising the monotheistic Vaiṣṇavite faith, which being confined to Sanskrit scriptures, was not accessible to the common man. Like all other medieval Vaiṣṇava schools of India, the neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement in Assam was essentially based on devotional elements. Absolute self-surrender at the feet of the Lord and a feeling of ecstatic joy and happiness in serving or worshipping Him are the two main characteristics of *bhakti*. It is based on faith, not on dialectics. Śaṅkaradeva also preached *bhakti* both as a means and an end of human existence. It has been said that in Kaliyuga there is no better mode of serving God than *bhakti*, inasmuch as God is easily pleased by devotion alone. Further, it is easy to practise and could be adopted by all, irrespective of caste, creed, sex and status.[10] Śaṅkaradeva's attitude to *bhakti* is amply illustrated in the following lines:

> Bhakti is the mother, father, brother, kith and kin and the highest treasure of life. It is the highest ideal (*gati*), the desire (*mati*) and the guiding force of life. It is the highest good and the wealth of life (*vitta*) and possesses germs of liberation. It is the solace of life, the vital breath of the body (*prāṇa*) as it were. There is no other path of life save and except *bhakti* in this world and the next.[11]

Knowledge (*jñāna*) without *bhakti*, according to Śaṅkaradeva, is futile; the process of seeking God according to the path of knowledge (*jñāna-mārga*) is compared to husking of seedless paddy.[12] The necessity of knowledge for God-realisation or liberation is not altogether ruled out. Knowledge is considered essential in the process of self-realisation, but any separate effort is unnecessary for it. It comes automatically after a certain stage of the devotional process is attained. The highest ideal of a true devotee, according to Śaṅkaradeva, is not the attainment of the state of absorption in the attributeless Brahman, but an eternal continuity with God which affords unique advantage for serving the Lord.

The attitude of Śaṅkaradeva and his followers towards *karma* (action) is on the pattern of the *Gītā* which exalts desireless action performed in the name of God. Of the three types of ceremonial actions, *nitya* (daily), *naimittika* (occasional) and *kāmya* (motivated or having attachment), Śaṅkaradeva speaks vehemently against the last type where selfish motive predominates. The other two types are tolerated, but they must be conducive to the development of *bhakti*.[13] Of the two types of *bhakti*, *sakāma* (having desire for fruit) and *niṣkāma* (desireless), the latter has been highly extolled and discussed in detail in all the devotional works of the Śaṅkarite period.[14]

The devotional works mention nine ways or modes of practising devotion. They are (*i*) *śravaṇa*, act of listening to the names and sports of the Lord, (*ii*) *kīrtana*, the act of chanting prayers, (*iii*) *smaraṇa*, the act of remembering the forms, sports and names of the adorable deity, (*iv*) *padasevana* or the act of serving the feet of the Lord, (*v*) *arcanā* or the rite of ceremonial worship of the image of the deity, (*vi*) *vandanā*, the act of salutation and prostration at the feet of the Lord. The next three elements of devotion cannot strictly be called ways or modes of *bhakti*; rather they indicate devotional relationship between the worshipper and the worshipped. Thus, (*vii*) *dāsya* consists in serving the Lord with the attitude of a selfless faithful slave, (*viii*) *sakhya* is based on the sense of friendship between the adorer and the adored, and (*ix*) *atmanivedana* signifies complete self-surrender.[15]

Of the above ninefold *bhakti*, Assam Vaiṣṇavism especially extolled and prescribed the first two, viz., *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana* as highly efficacious modes for the inculcation of devotional attitude of mind. These are not subject to restriction of time, place and person. In this connection Śaṅkaradeva says, "Although there are nine ways of devotion to Mādhava, *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana* are considered to be the best among them."[16] In fact, the vast literature composed by Śaṅkaradeva and his followers, comprising of songs, plays, verse translations and devotional compendia, is mainly intended for the purpose of *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana* by his Vaiṣṇavite followers.

Śaṅkaradeva and his followers look upon God with the attitude of a faithful and loving servant. Taking into account the relation between *jīva* and *īśvara* as the creator and the created and the limitations under which the *jīva* operates under the invisible control of the Lord. Śaṅkaradeva is of the opinion that *dāsyabhāva* i.e., the attitude of a selfless and faithful slave towards his master, is the proper attitude with which God should be approached. In the ultimate analysis the *jīva* may partake of the nature of God, but as long as it forms a part of creation, whether illusory or real it is preserved and sustained by God. From this angle of vision, the position of God is that of the master. Śaṅkaradeva has expressed that relation by describing himself as the slave of Kṛṣṇa. In one of his verses he says, "I have become a slave of the slave of thy slave, Oh Lord. Do not make me a destitute, Lord of the world; Oh Madhava; do not forsake thy slave.[17]

For awakening and deepening the devotional sensibility Assam Vaiṣṇavism lays special emphasis on the indispensability of four fundamental elements or agencies of cultivating devotional faculty. They are *nāma* (names of the adorable God), *deva* (deity), *guru* (spiritual guide) and *bhakta* (devotee). A religious aspirant must, not only be in touch with holy association of devotees, he must permanently attach himself to one spiritual guide. A life on the path of devotion without a spiritual guide (*guru*) is often compared to a boat plying in the ocean without a helmsman (*karṇadhāra*).[18] Once the proper *guru* is selected the disciple must pay full allegiance to him and serve him with his body and mind. Thus, by the guidance of the *guru* and the help derived from the association with devotees (*satsaṅga*), *bhakti* can be attained and deepened. The *guru*, the holy association (*satsaṅga*), the name of the Lord (*nāma*) and the adorable deity, i.e. Viṣṇu (*deva*) constitute the four fundamental elements (*cārivastu*) of Assamese Vaiṣṇavism propagated by Śaṅkaradeva. These four elements are interlinked and they are nothing but four aspects of the composite doctrine of *bhakti*.

Śaṅkaradeva strictly prohibited worship of any other deity but Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa. Although he admitted the existence of gods, he considered them as offshoots or partial manifestations of the supreme God Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa who incarnated himself as Gopāla Kṛṣṇa in all the glory. Śaṅkaradeva expressed his monotheistic belief in the following verses of *Bhakti-Pradīpa.*

> Devote yourself to me with a single mind, forsake from a distance all other gods, surrender yourself to me alone, worship me, then you will be fit for liberation. Never listen to the names of other gods, so that your devotion may remain unsullied.[19]

As regards the worship of idols, Śaṅkaradeva does not seem to have put much importance on them. While initiating or ordaining neophytes, he always made them prostrate before a holy book placed on the altar. Biographies do not testify to the existence of any image in the religious establishments of Śaṅkaradeva. At the initial stage of his movement at Bardowā he is said to have installed an idol of Madana Gopāla with a view to attracting the Brāhmaṇas of the locality. But afterwards he did not encourage idol-worship. The following lines of his *kīrtana* express his attitude towards idol-worship.[20]

> People take ablution in water believing it to be holy, and consider a stone image as the deity but do not pay respect to a Vaiṣṇava as they do in case of water or idol. Such persons are worse than cattle.

It should not, however, be taken that Śaṅkaradeva totally discarded image worship. In his *Bhakti-Ratnākara*, a Sanskrit devotional compilation with his own commentary, he prescribes the worship of idols for *prākṛta bhaktas*, i.e. devotees at the preliminary stage who cannot direct their attention to God, without any external symbol or agency.

Social Teachings

Śaṅkaradeva advised his followers not to hate anybody however lowly placed he might be. Without enquiring into the caste or creed, a Vaiṣṇava, according to him, should treat equally a Brāhmaṇa or a Caṇḍāla. The following lines translated from Śaṅkaradeva's *kīrtana* speak eloquently of his view in this regard.

He is universally called a wise man who without discriminating between a Brāhmaṇa and a Caṇḍāla or between a charitable man and a thief, treats them with equanimity. He is called a learned man who judges an honest person and a debased man impartially without discrimination.[21]

Śaṅkaradeva preached equality in the spiritual domain. According to him, the path of spiritual realisation cannot be the exclusive monopoly of a socially privileged few. "A Caṇḍāla who remembers God with heart and soul is superior to a Brāhmaṇa observing religious vows," says Śaṅkara.[22] True to this ideal Śaṅkaradeva enlisted followers from all walks and sections of people. One of his leading followers was a Muslim.

It was not the aim of Śaṅkaradeva and his followers to do away or interfere with the caste system; they rather tacitly accepted the prevailing social system based on caste. Their sole concern was to see that social distinctions based on caste system did not hinder one's inherent right to spiritual development.

It has been a custom with spiritual seekers of all times to condemn women and wealth with a view to evoking spiritual detachment. Assamese Vaiṣṇavas, headed by Śaṅkara have not spoken favourably of women and in several passages Śaṅkaradeva has decried the evil influence of woman and wealth which he enjoins upon all Vaiṣṇavas to avoid.[23] No doubt Śaṅkaradeva decried women because he thought that sex leads men astray from the path of devotion. But in practice, the Vaiṣṇavas have shown no hostility towards women. On the other hand they have shown commendable generosity towards them by initiating them to their devotional cult. The later history of the sect proves that women were sometimes raised to the position of religious headship. Śaṅkaradeva's grand daughter-in-law Kanaklatā and Harideva's daughter Bhuvaneśvarī were recognised as heads of their respective sub-ects.

Renunciation of the world for the sake of religion or liberation is not extolled by Śaṅakradeva. Several instances narrated in his biographies point to the inevitable conclusion that he was personally not in favour of renouncing the world or accepting *saṁnyāsa* to seek spiritual advancement. Himself leading an ideal householder's life, he did not regard marriage to be an obstacle in the path of devotion. Most of his principal disciples were married persons. Mādhavadeva, his most faithful and trusted disciple who succeeded him to the pontifical office, however, remained a life-long celibate. Even he is said to have advised his followers, on the eve of his death, not to adopt celibacy taking him as their model.[24] But, in spite of instructions to the contrary, a section of Vaiṣṇavas have been practising celibacy in the Vaiṣṇavite institution of Assam.

Celibacy has been obligatory in the monastic *sattras* (Vaiṣṇavite establishments) while in other institutions it is left to the option of the devotees.

The ethical ideal is determined by what is regarded as the highest good of the human existence. Of the four fundamental ideals of the traditional Indian life, the fourth ideal, i.e., the liberation from the bondage of the world is considered to be the highest ideal, and one should conduct oneself in this world as would enable him to attain that ideal. Śaṅkaradeva propagates that the highest religion is the religion of loving devotion to Kṛṣṇa and therefore the highest good (*parāgati*) can be attained by leading the life of a true Vaiṣṇava. The grace of God is attainable only by devotion and self-surrender which ultimately beget knowledge. But belief in the theory of grace neither encouraged them to postulate that individual effort for the attainment of the highest good was unnecessary, nor did it amount to the indiscriminate availability of God's mercy without any consideration of good or bad actions. Śaṅkara advised the performance of only such duties as are not in conflict with his devotion.

Śaṅkara believed in the theory of rebirth and the doctrine of *karma*. He writes:

> Creatures are born and are subjected to pleasure and pain, affliction and fear owing to the working of the law of *karma*. Life cannot be one of inaction, it will either be good or bad action. People enjoy or suffer inevitably the consequence of their deeds.[25]

The belief in the doctrine of *karma* did not lead Śaṅkaradeva to have a fatalistic outlook on life, an outlook that chills all initiatives and gusto for life. In this connection an interesting incident is narrated in the *Kathā-Gurucarita*.

One day while Mādhavadeva accompanied by a few colleagues was proceeding to a village, he came across a rogue buffalo notorious for its ferocity. The companions moved away in haste, but Mādhava did not stop nor moved away. He justified his action by saying. 'If it is my fate to be killed by the animal, nobody can save me.' Fortunately the animal did not attack him. On hearing this incident Śaṅkara reprimanded Mādhava in the following words.

> Do you know, Mādhava, that a lamp can go off in spite of oil

and wick being present if proper precaution against wind is not taken? This attitude on your part will encourage others to be reckless of their lives.

So saying, he advised Mādhava not to trifle with his life or take a fatalistic view of life.[26]

In innumerable passages of Śaṅkaradeva's writings the universally accepted conduct of right living has been extolled and vices have been deprecated. These moral qualities are truthfulness, indifference to worldly pleasures, kindness, hospitality, temperance, contentment, patience, purity of heart, control over passions, etc. Non-violence or mercy towards all creatures has been recognised as a great virtue. Some quotations from Śaṅkara's writings are given below in translation.

(*i*) Truth elevates us to the higher regions, while untruth (*asatya*) degrades us to path of ruin. So, try to maintain truthfulness.[27]

(*ii*) One who bears false witness and cheats people in the process of buying and selling, is punished after his death by the agents of the god of death.[28]

(*iii*) One should regard material wealth as dreadful as death because it is the source of all evil.[29]

(*iv*) Creatures in the grip of fear or danger should always be protected. A truly good man protects others' life by sacrificing has own, when necessary. Even the performance of millions of horse-sacrifices is not equal to the one deed of giving shelter to a distressed creature.[30]

(*v*) One who oppresses others for the sake of one's own body verily goes to hell, after death.[31]

(*vi*) Even if an arch-enemy happens to come as a guest he should be served like a god, without regard to his previous inimical behaviour.[32]

(*vii*) He is a good and pious king who protects his subjects as his own sons. It is not the characteristic of a good king who gives punishment without ascertaining faults or crimes. If the king goes astray whom the people would seek for shelter and protection.[33]

(*viii*) One who steals property, sets fire to houses and commits dacoity in villages or over a wide area goes to hell where dogs with sharp teeth and ravens bite him mercilessly.[34]

Instances may be multiplied *ad infinitum*, but the quotations given above should be enough to prove the ethical aspect of Śaṅkaradeva's writings.

Philosophical Teachings

Śaṅkaradeva was primarily a social and religious reformer and not a speculative thinker. His purpose was not to propound a philosophy based religion supported by discursive reasoning and abstract thinking, but to propagate a simple system of faith based on devotion. He could rightly perceive that the society of his times was in need of a reformed religion rather than a well-formulated philosophical system. Unlike some other Vaiṣṇavite reformers of medieval India right from Rāmānuja down to Vallabhācārya who reinforced their religious beliefs by philosophical systems, Śaṅkaradeva did not directy formulate a clear-cut philosophical system. He seems, however, to have followed consistently the commentary of Śrīdharasvāmī, an ascetic of the monistic school of Śaṅkarācārya. Śrīdhara has interpreted the philosophical aspects of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* and the *Gītā* in the light of the Advaita school, tempered by loving devotion and faith. In the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* God has been described as immanent and transcendental and having both *nirguṇa* (attributeless) and *saguṇa* (having attributes) aspects. Śaṅkaradeva in his doctrinal work *Bhakti-Ratnākara*, without denying the indeterminate and arttibuteless aspect of God, however, laid more stress on the *saguṇa* aspect, because loving devotion demands a personal God. In his celebrated work *Kīrtana*, he describes the twofold aspects of God and says that as the indeterminate God is not comprehensible, devotees worship and adore his beatific form in the person of Nārayaṇa.[35] The first two lines of the *Kīrtana* have struck the above note in the following way. "At the very outset, I bow down to the eternal Brahma who, in the form of Nārāyaṇa, is the cause of all incarnations."[36]

The Supreme Being, viz., Nārāyaṇa, possesses all the familiar three attributes, *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda*. He is infinite in nature and attributes. He is omniscient, omnipotent, creator, preserver and destroyer of the world. Śaṅkaradeva gives expression to the above notion of God in the following way:

> Nārāyaṇa is the Supreme soul and the only Lord of the universe. Nothing exists without Him. He is the cause as well as the effect of the creation. Just as ornaments made of gold do not differ in substance from the material cause gold, similarly there is no distinction between God as the cause and God as the effect.[37]

Again he writes in another place:

> Just as water, air, earth and sky are pervading the world, in the same way God is pervading the mind, intellect and vital breath (*prāṇa*) of things and beings. He is pure, attributeless and conscious self of the universe. In him the world of creation exists and yet He is beyond the world.[38]

The monistic philosophy could be read in many passages of his writings. The following extracts translated from his writings will bring out the monistic (*advaita*) view of Śaṅkara in respect of the relation between God and individual self or between God and the phenomenal world.

"He (God) is the only Reality and everything else that appears in different names and forms is illusory."[39]

"Átman is immutable and immortal; it was neither born in the past nor in the present times. Birth and death are the characteristics of the physical body, and out the body a fresh one emerges. Though associated with the mortal body *ātman* is distinct from the body as fire from the fuel it burns. Just as the sky in a pot merges in the unlimited ether with the breakage of the pot, the embodied self in the similar way merges in the infinite *brahman* after the destruction of the phenomenal body. The mind (*manas*), which determines and guides the quality and activity of the body is the product of *māyā* and owing to ignorance produced by the latter the embodied self associates itself with the activities of the body. A lamp is supposed to give light so long there is contact of the wick with oil and fire. Similarly the noumenal self goes by the name *jīva* and suffers pain and miseries of the world so long as it is associated with the body, mind and senses. But know it for certain, that the worldly existence really concerns the phenomenal body and mind and not the self. Though the fire of a lamp apparently vanishes with the cessation of its contact with wick and oil, yet it cannot be said that the fire so long visible has altogether perished.

Fire in the shape of *mahājyoti* can never perish, though it may not be apparently visible. Do not any way doubt the great message "though I am associated with the body yet I am not identical with it, I am verily Paramātman. I am Brahman and Brahman is I.[40]

"Jīva is not different from Īśvara: it is by nature all bliss and immutable. But being enveloped by ignorance the *jīva* does not know its real nature."[41]

"Although the entire world is unreal, it appears as real due to your association with it. There is no end to the power of your *māyā*. You are Supreme Soul with incomprehensible power." So says Mādhavadeva in his *Rājasūya Kāvya*.[42]

The above extract clearly brings out the Advaita view held by Śaṅkaradeva. The Advaita view is inextricably associated with the doctrine of *māyā*. Śaṅkaradeva has also recognised it in its dual capacity. The ignorant being deceived by *māyā* beholds many objects instead of one reality. The inscrutable power of *māyā* has the double function of concealing the real nature of Brahman and making Him appear as something else. The power of *māyā* that conceals the real is called *āvaraṇa śakti* and that which distorts our knowledge is called *vikṣepaṇa śakti*. Śaṅkara has referred to both these aspects of the power of *māyā*.[43]

From the fact that Śaṅkara recognised the illusory power of *māyā* in the line of the Advaita philosophy, it becomes obvious that the world has no reality apart from God. It may be empirically real but not so in the ultimate sense. Therefore, Śaṅkara and his followers have described the world in many a passage as *asatya* and *māyāmaya* and the analogies of the mirage, rope and the snake have been drawn to explain the nature of the world.

As regards the relation of the embodied self (*jīva*) with Brahman Śaṅkaradeva writes:

> *Manas* (mind), *buddhi* (intellect), *ahamkāra* (ego) and *indriyas* (senses) have no separate existence apart from God. Diverse forms and appearances are unreal, only Brahman underlying them is real. Unreal forms and appearances seem real to the ignorant, as a rope sometimes appear to be a snake owing to optical illusion. The state of waking (*jāgaraṇa*) or sleep and other functions of the body that characterise mind, intellect and senses, take place owing to the influence of *māyā* . . . . Brahman manifests in all phenomena like the sky that exists in different

> receptacles irrespective of their size and forms. Brahman is without difference (*bhedarahita*) even though He may appear to manifest differently in different objects: it is like the process of the sun being reflected on different sheets of water. But the sun can never be more than one. Just as various ornaments of gold appear distinct and many, although the real substance is gold, similarly Brahman appears to be many under different circumstances to the ignorant people deluded by *māyā*.[44]

Now, Śaṅkaradeva does not make any subtle distinction between the attributeless, indeterminate and formless Brahman and the Supreme Being as the creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe. In fact, he was of the opinion that when the Supreme Reality is viewed as the conjurer of the world show or as the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world, it appears as the personal God receiving adoration from devotees. This personal God is then known as Bhagavat or Īśvara. But when the same Reality is viewed from a pure idealistic viewpoint, without having any connection with the creation, it is conceived as the indeterminate, impersonal Brahman. In this connection Śaṅkara writes: "Brahman, Paramātman and Bhagavat are the names of one Supreme Reality. The same Reality is called by different names due to different characteristics, viewed from different angles of vision."[45]

Śaṅkara did not advocate worship of the attributeless Brahman, because people in general among whom he preached the new religion could not be expected to grasp the concept of God who is *nirākāra* (formless), *nirañjana* (unattached) and *nirguṇa* (attributeless). People always require a Divinity which could be meditated upon and mentally visualised. Therefore, Śaṅkara's adorable God Nārāyaṇa, who is considered identical with Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa, not only does possess the metaphysical qualities like omnipresence, omniscience, etc., but such moral virtues also as mercy, grace, love, compassion, etc. He is the friend of the lowly (*dīnabandhu*) compassionate (*karuṇāmaya*), beloved of the devotees (*bhakta-vatsala*) and redeemer of the sinners (*patitapāvana*).

Śaṅkara and his followers believed in the theory of incarnation. The belief that God descends on this world from time to time to reedem the world is accepted by them. In the opening chapter of his *Kīrtana*, Śaṅkara enumerates twenty-four incarnations of

Nārāyaṇa.[46] Gopāla Kṛṣṇa is considered to be the perfect manifestation of Nārāyaṇa.

Liberation

The *summum-bonum* of the Hindu life is the attainment of liberation which not only acquits man of the ordeal of repeated births and deaths but begets divine bliss and happiness by establishing a close communion with God. Liberation may be obtained during life (*jīvanmukti*) as well as after death (*videhamukti*). Assamese Vaiṣṇavas headed by Śaṅkaradeva have recognised both the above two types of liberation. Following the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* they have classified *videhamukti* into five categories, viz., *sālokaya* (being in the same plane with God) *sāmīpya* (nearness to God), *sārūpya* (likeness to God in form) *sārṣti* (equal with God in glory) and *sāyujya* (absorption in God). Śaṅkaradeva and other Vaiṣṇavas of Assam did not look with favour the *sāyujya* of *līna mukti* where complete absorption or merger in God deprives *jīvas* of the sweetness and bliss associated with loving devotion and vision of the beatific form of the Lord. This proves that Vaiṣṇavas including Śaṅkaradeva considered *bhakti* preferable to *mukti* or liberation. In the *Bhakti-Ratnākara* of Śaṅkaradeva and the *Nāmaghoṣā* of Mādhavadeva, *bhakti* has been preferred to *mukti*. It has been said in the former work that a devotee of Kṛṣṇa never hankers after *sāyujya mukti*—and consider the state of ecstatic devotion even superior to *mukti*.[47] But this does not mean that Śaṅkara was averse to *mukti*. According to him, liberation comes automatically in its own time. It is inherent in the process of devotion.[48] When devotion is directed solely with motive of liberation it smacks of selfishness. The process of devotion should be *niṣkāma* (desireless) and cultivated to please God only.

Śaṅkara's philosophical teachings are not totally free from certain contradictions. For instance, the pure Advaitins consider God as immanent and personal from the empirical standpoint (*vyavahārika dṛṣṭi*) and He is the object of worship from a lower standpoint. From the higher standpoint the absolute Reality is conceived as impersonal, indeterminate and above the creation. But Śaṅkaradeva, generally accepting the monistic viewpoint of the identity of *jīvātman* and *paramātman* and recognising the theory of *māyā* has not tried explicitly to reconcile the empirical and the ultimate idealistic viewpoint in his theological discussions. Again, if Īśvara and *jīva* are identical in the ultimate analysis and their apparent difference is conditional only, as stated by Śaṅkaradeva, then the logical course would have been to recognise *jīvan-mukti* and *līna-mukti* only, as the Advaitins do. But Śaṅkaradeva and his followers have also admitted four other forms of liberation which do not strictly accord with the Advaita doctrine. But such minor discrepancies are bound to be present in his writings when we take into account that Śaṅkara did not come forward to propound any philosophy. On the other hand, he gave a system of religion easily practisable by people. Whatever the philosophy has emerged out of his voluminous writings, it is only a by-product.

Literary Contribution

It has already been stated that Śaṅkara was not merely a religious reformer but a great scholar and poet as well. He has greatly enriched Assamese literature by translating some Purāṇas, mainly the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, by composing several *kāvyas*, dramas and devotional lyrics, and by compiling doctrinal or theological treatises. He used mainly Assameses as the medium of his literary works, but in dramas and devotional lyrics, the Brajabuli, an artificial literary language, used by the Vaiṣṇavas of eastern India wherein a sprinkling of Assamese idioms and expressions is also noticed. His proficiency in the use of Sanskrit is admirably revealed in his devotional doctrinal compilation *Bhakti-Ratnākara* where he adds his own commentary on the verses quoted from different Purāṇas.

Śaṅkara utilised his scholarship and poetic genius for the propagation of his new faith. He translated religious scriptures, composed *kāvyas*, wrote dramas and enacted them with a view to educating the masses in the Vaiṣṇavite lores and ideas. Therefore, a thin veneer of propaganda in favour of Vaiṣṇavism covers his writings, but that has not adversely affected their literary appeal.

So far as longer narrative episodes in verse are concerned they are mostly based on the stories of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* narrated in different books or *skandhas*. Retaining most of the descriptions of the original Purāṇa in Assamese renderings, Śaṅkaradeva has elaborated or developed many incidents of those stories to illustrate characters and situations to satisfy the literary taste of discerning listeners or readers. These episodical *kāvyas* serve the twofold purpose of desseminating Vaiṣṇavite ideals and giving literary pleasure to the readers.

Of his translations or adaptations the most important is the *Daśama*, a liberal translation of the 10th Book of the *Bhāgavata.* The tenth book contains 90 chapters of which Śaṅkara translated 49 chapters from the beginning. This part deals with the narratives from the birth of Kṛṣṇa to the killing of Kaṃsa at Mathura. The translation of the latter part from the 50th chapter to the end (90th chapter) was assigned to one of his favourite disciples, viz., Ananta Kandalī. In fact, the *Daśama* of Śaṅkaradeva is considered as one of the four principal holy scriptures by the Vaiṣṇavas of Assam, the other three being *Kīrtanaghoṣā* of Śaṅkaradeva, *Nāmaghoṣā* and *Bhakti-Ratnāvalī* of Mādhavadeva. These four holy scriptures are objects of special venerating and all prayer services are held by installing one of the above four books on the holy seat or throne of the prayer hall. The *Daśama* is characterised by sweetness of diction, easy flow of metrical rhythm and poetic narration.

Of the theological works the *Bhakti-Ratnākara*, a compilation of Sanskrit verses having theological and philosophical significance, is the most important work to understand the religious tenets and doctrines of the cult. The Sanskrit verses are compiled from different Vaiṣṇavite works and Śaṅkara adds a commentary of his own on the collected verses.

Another most popular and highly venerated work is the *Kīrtanaghoṣā* containing 28 sections, each depicting a Purāṇtic episode of narration impregnated with devotional platitudes and religious teachings. The work was not originally composed as a single volume, it was compiled into a single volume during the time of his successor Mādhavadeva who managed to collect different sections lying at different places through the instrumentality of his cousin Rāmacarana. The *Kīrtanaghoṣā* represents a distinct style of composition meant to be sung at the prayer services. Each chapter is, therefore marked by a refrain followed by narrative verses. *Guṇamālā* is a miniature version of the entire 10th Book of the *Bhāgavata.*

Śaṅkaradeva is the father of the Assamese drama. His plays are characterised by the following characteristics.

(*i*) The plays are written in the Brajabuli language, an artificial literary language of the Vaiṣṇava lyricists of eastern India.

(*ii*) The Sūtradhāra who introduces the plays remains on the stage throughout the performance directing the play, and supplying links between the gaps of the plot.

(*iii*) The plays are devoid of any acts of divisions. Each play may be considered as containing only one act.

(*iv*) Interspersed with prose-dialogues, the plays are notable for their lyrical rhythmic appeal.

(*v*) Except the plot of *Rāma-vijaya*, the themes of all other plays are taken from the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa.*

Śaṅkaradeva not only composed plays, but made all arrangements for successful presentation of them. He trained the musicians, dancers and actors, had all the equipments and accessories prepared by artisans and planned the preliminaries of the show. Thus he master-minded the entire dramatic process of medieval Assam.

His contribution to the realm of music is no less spectacular. He was a master artist in the arts of dance and music and was thoroughly familiar with classical music. He composed a few scores of lyrics set to classical *rāgas* (melody), which are known as *Bargīta* or songs sublime. According to the Vaiṣṇavite tradition Śaṅkara composed 240 songs, of which only 34 are available at present. On account of their sublime theme, dignity of expression, depth of devotional feeling and lyrical beauty this class of lyrical composition is called *Bargīta*, (*bār*-great) in order to distinguish them from folk or popular songs. The followers of Śaṅkara continued the tradition of composing *Bargīta* till the beginning of the nineteenth century and the number of such lyrical songs comes approximately to one thousand. Of course, the orthodox section of Vaiṣṇavas consider only compositions of the first two *gurus*, viz. Śaṅkara and Mādhava as genuine *Bargīta.* A specimen of Śaṅkaradeva's *Bargīta* is given below in translation. The themes of Śaṅkara's lyrics are the futility of worldly desire, transitoriness of the human life and desirability of taking shelter under the feet of Rāma. He addresses the mind in the following song:

Rest my mind, rest at the feet of Rāma;
Seest Thou not the great end approaching?
My mind! every moment, life is shortening.
Look, any moment it might flit off.
My mind! the serpent of time is gobbling up everything.
Know'st Thou not that the death is creeping on stealthily?

My mind! surely this body will drop down
So, break through illusion and resort to Rāma.
Oh mind! thou are blind:
Thou seest the vanity of things,
Yet thou seest not.
Why art thou, oh mind, slumbering at ease?
Awake and think of Govinda.
Oh mind! Śaṅkara knows it and says
Except through Rāma, there is no hope.[49]

Organisational Aspect

Literature was not the only expression of this faith. Śaṅkara with his clear foresight made adequate provision for the stabilisation of the cult. He laid the foundation of the *Sattra*, institution, which has been functioning as an organ of religious propagation for the last five hundred years. This institution which was in nebular state during the life-time of Śaṅkara gained an organised shape later with a regular set of functionaries in hierarchical order serving in the *Sattra* premises as well as in villages. The main architects of this institution after Śaṅkaradeva were Mādhavadeva and Dāmodaradeva the two immediate successors of the saint. With the spread of Vaiṣṇavism, this institution being the main organ of propagation, began to spring up in every nook and corner of Assam some of which received liberal patronage from the kings and nobles. The unusual multiplication of *Sattras* absorbed a large number of able-bodied adults as devotees within the *Sattra* precincts and this adversely affected the state in managing military operations and works of public utility. So, Gadādhara Siṃha (1681-96) had to take stern action against the mushroom growth of *Sattras*. Even then, the role of the *Sattras* in the spread of neo-Vaisnavism in Assam is worthy of being written in letters of gold. There are monastic and semi-monastic *Sattras* spread over the entire Brahmaputra valley which have been disseminating Vaiṣṇavite ideals and teachings not only among the people of the plains but also among the remote tribal areas. These local *Sattras* framed moral laws and controlled the activities of the society. A miniature replica of the *Sattras*, the village *Nāmghar* (prayer hall), with the combined functions of a village church, a village court and a village stage was initiated by Śaṅkaradeva himself. To quote Dr. B. Kakati, an eminent Assamese scholar:

> These institutions served as the sheet anchor of Assamese society in the midst of continually shifting political circumstances. They often shook to their foundations under the blast of the rulers' fury, but stood erect again after the fury was spent. But whether in the sunshine or under clouds, they were regarded as the vital centres of life and worthy of the gift of all that was prized and loved best.[50]

Later Developments

Śaṅkaradeva did not nominate anyone of his two sons to succeed him as the head of the Vaiṣṇavite community. Instead, he nominated his most trusted and able disciple Mādhavadeva to lead the Vaiṣṇavite movement and guide the new community of devotees after his demise. Mādhava, also an erudite scholar, poet and musician, steered the helm of the Vaiṣṇava movement for 28 years after the demise of the master and systematised the organisational aspects of the cult. He established the Barpeta Sattra on a sound democratic basis allotting functions to devotees for due discharge of their duties. It was he who assigned the foremost status to the holy books in place of idols. On the eve of his death when his disciples approached him with the request to nominate his successor, he is said to have replied:

> I pondered over that problem for three days but have not found anybody worthy of shouldering the pontifical burdern. I, therefore, recommended my *Nāma-ghoṣā* as your guide where everything that may be necessary for you has been said. I have employed all my energy and intellect in composing it. Devotees will find me there if they know how to seek me.[51]

According to *Bardowā-Gurucarita* and *Śaṅkara-carita* by Rāma Charaṇa Ṭhākur, Śaṅkara at the time of his last departure to Cooch Behar advised Mādhava to look for him in the pages of his *Kīrtana* and *Daśma.*[52] The *Kathāguru-carita*, a prose biographical work on the lives of saints narrates that Mādhava advised his disciples to regard *Kīrtana* and *Daśama* as representatives of Śaṅkara and the *Ratnāvalī* and *Nāma ghoṣā* as his own[53]. Perhaps on the strength of these utterances of the first two *gurus*, the above holy books were raised to the status of pre-eminence and they took the place of the idol or the deity. The seat on which the holy books are kept is known as the *guru-āsana* and all religious functions are held before this holy seat. Thus, Mādhavadeva raised the status of holy scriptures composed by the *guru* and himself by making them symbols of Godhead as well as their own selves.

Mādhava is supposed to have breathed his last in AD 1596. As he did not nominate anybody as his successor, the Vaiṣṇavite community divided itself into three sections under different religious leaders. During the initial stage of Mādhava's headship, a section of Vaiṣṇavas under the leadership of Dāmodaradeva and Harideva drifted away from the main current. Their sub-sect, later known as Brahma-saṃhati, did not discard Brahmanical rites and rituals which, they thought, were not in direct conflict with the main tenets of Vaiṣṇavism. After the death of Mādhava, the Vaiṣṇavite community divided itself into three groups, each emphasizing one or the other of the four fundamental elements, viz,, *nāma*, *deva*, *guru*, and *bhakta*. The group organised by the grandsons of Śaṅkaradeva, emphasizing *nāma* element, came to style itself as the Puruṣa-saṃhati, probably deriving its name from the honorific epithet *Mahāpuruṣa*, usually applied to Śaṅkaradeva. The second sub-section, probably headed by Mathurādāsa and Padma Atā, two of the important *dharmācāryas* appointed by Mādhava, is known as the Nika-samhati, because it is supposed to maintain the teachings recommended by Mādhava in their unadulterated form. This section of Vaiṣṇavas give special emphasis on the *bhakta* element or association of devotees. The third section known as the Kāla-saṃhati is the most aggressive and progressive in outlook. It gives extraordinary importance to the *guru* or the religious head. In fact, this section regards the *guru* as the earthly representative of God and waged virulent struggle against the ruling Ahom power towards the last quarter of the eighteenth century to avenge the oppression and killing of their *gurus* by the suspicious Ahom kings. Their battle-slogan was "We shall kill or shall be killed to repay the debt we own to our *gurus*.[54] This militant sub-section was started by Gopāla Atā, an important disciple of Mādhavadeva, in the first half of the seventeenth century. The religious preachers affiliated to this section are responsible for keeping the door of Vaiṣṇavism widely open. As a result, a large slice of tribal people and socially backward communities were converted to Vaiṣṇavism.

Thus we find that neo-Vaiṣṇavite faith and movement initiated by Śaṅkaradeva, brought in its wake a cultural renaissance in the sixteenth century. It kept its onward march during the stewardship of Mādhavadeva,. Like Śaṅkaradeva, Mādhava was also a gifted poet and singer. He also composed a large number of lyrics and six plays depicting childish sports and naughty behaviour of Kṛṣṇa. His *Nāmaghoṣā*, a devotional work of one thousand verses, is one of the four main devotional works held in the highest regard by the Vaiṣṇavas. Besides the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, the two great epics and a few more Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas were rendered into smooth and easily comprehensible Assamese verses. The *Bhāgavata*, the *Gītā* and the *Bhakti-Ratanāvali*, besides having metrical versions, were also rendered into Assamese prose by Vaikuṇṭhanātha Bhāgavata-Bhattacarya in the first decade of the seventeenth century. Enactment of devotional plays written by the initiators of the movement and their followers continued unabated in the village chapels and *Sattras* till recent times. By the middle of the seventeenth century the current began to flow in four branch channels drawing their main flow from the head-water without much deviations. During the next few centuries the entire Brahmaputra Valley including some parts of tribal areas were more or less covered by a network of *Sattras*, the Vaiṣṇavite institutions, which not only spread the messages of Śaṅkara and Mādhava in every nook and corner of Assam but also looked after the moral and religious welfare of the people who came under their fold. There are, at present, nearly six hundred *Sattras* operating in different parts of Assam, but the onslaught of modern scepticism and irreligious tendency of the people have considerably weakened their former hold on the people.

To conclude, "Rulers have come and gone and their kingdoms have perished in the dust, but Śaṅkaradeva's State endures and in the hearts of men his power survives."[55]

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[1] For details of the social, political and religious background see *Śaṅkaradeva and His Times*, chap. 2, by Dr. M. Neog and the *Neo-Vaisnavite Movement and the Sattra Institution of Assam*, chap. 1, by Dr. S.N. Sharma.

[2] E. Gait, *History of Assam*, p. 85.

[3] M. Neog, *Śaṅkaradeva & His Age*, pp. 100-1; S.N. Sharma, *The Neo-Vaisnvavite Movement and the Sattra Institution of Assam*, p. 16.

[4] *Kīrtana*, III.

[5] *Rukminīharaṇa-Kāvya*, verse 2, *Uttarakāṇḍa Rāmāyana*. V.4.

[6] *Bhāgavata*, Book V, v. 4391.

[7] Ṭhākur Daityāri, *Śaṅkaradeva-Mādhavadeva-carita*, p. 25.

[8] Śaṅkaradeva, *Bhāgavata*, II, v. 544.

[9] Mādhavadeva, *Gurubhaṭimā*.

[10] Śaṅkaradeva, *Kīrtana*, VII, v. 381.

[11] Śaṅkaradeva, *Bhāgavata*, X, v. 10864.

[12] Śaṅkaradeva, *Bhakti-Ratnākara*, vv. 903.4; *Kīrtana*, X, vv. 745-45; *Bhāgavata*, X, v. 490.

[13] Śaṅkaradeva, *Bhakti-Ratnākara*, v. 961.

[14] For details, vide *Neo-Vaisnavite Movement and the Sattra Institution of Assam* by the present author.

[15] *Kīrtana*, VI.

[16] *Bhāgavata*, I, v. 38.

[17] *Nimi-Navasidha-saṃvāda*, v. 309.

[18] *Bhakti-Ratnākara*, vv. 10-13.

[19] *huyoka śaraṇāpanna eka mote mātra*
moke bhajā huibā tebe mukutira pātra
nāma nushunibā tumi āno devatār
yena mate nuhibe bhakati vyabhichār.

[20] *tīrtha buli kare jalata śuddhi*
pratīmāta kare devatā buddhi
Vaiṣṇavata nai isava mati garuto adhama kṛṣṇa badati. *Kīrtana*, XXIV.

[21] *Brāhmaṇara caṇḍalara nivichāri kul*
datata chorata yena dṛṣṭi eka tul
nichata sādhuta yāra bhaila eka gyan
tāhānka paṇḍita bolaya sarvajana.—Ibid.

[22] *Bhāgavata*, X, vv. 12622-23.

[23] *Kīrtana*, VIII, v. 529.

[24] Ṭhākur Daityāri, chap. 60, v. 24-25.

[25] *Bhāgavata*, X, vv. 1006-7.

[26] *Kathā-gurucarita*, p. 107.

[27] *Hariścandra-upākhāyana*, v. 260.

[28] *Bhāgavata*, VI, v. 44.

[29] *Nimi-Navasiddha-saṃvāda*, v. 132.

[30] *Bhāgavata*, VIII, v. 205.

[31] *Nimi-Navasidda*, v. 357.

[32] *Bhāgavata*, VIII, v. 100.

[33] Ibid., VI. 159-60.

[34] *Anādi-Pātan*, v. 586.

[35] *Kīrtana (oresavarnaṇa)*, vv. 84-85.

[36] Ibid., I, v.I.

[37] Ibid., VIII, vv. 37, *Bhāgavata*, X, vv. 13030-31.

[38] *Bhakti-Ratnākara*, v. III.

[39] Ibid.

[40] *Bhāgavata*, XI, vv. 18512-18.

[41] *Bhakti-Ratnākara*, chap., III.

[42] *Rājasūya*, v. 109.
[43] Ibid., II, v. 650.
[44] *Bhāgavata*, XII, vv. 18479-86.
[45] *Nimi-Navasiddha-saṃvāda*, v. 180.
[46] *Kīrtana*, I, v.I.
[47] *Bhakti-Ratnākara*, (Assamese), v. 477.
[48] *Bhāgavata*, XI, v. 199.
[49] Translation by B. Kakaṭi.
[50] B. Kakati, *Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā*, p. 87.
[51] Ṭhākur, Daityāri, *Śaṅkara-Mādhava carita*, p. 328.
[52] *Śaṅkara-carita*, p. 295; *Barodowā-Gurucarita*, p. 167.
[53] *Kathā-Gurucarita*, p. 514.
[54] S.K. Bhuyan, (ed.), *Tungkhungiyā Burañjī*, p. 64.
[55] B. Kakati, *Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā*, p. 87.

23

Medieval Bhakti Movements in India: Śri Deva Dāmodara

SARAT CHANDRA GOSWAMI

The medieval *bhakti* movement in India is the reassertion of the historical process of development in religious thoughts and practices of the age of revolt which started with the Upaniṣadic teachings and their interpretations which proceeded in different directions in the establishment of different religious cults and beliefs. The elaborate rituals with their mechanical systems of worship to please God or gods by means of sacrifices later on could not satisfy the religious aspirations of the thoughtful which led to speculations questioning the worth and efficacy of animal sacrifices with consequent leanings towards favouring the doctrine of *ahimsā* and worship of God with devotion of the faithful for the attainment of God's grace. This attitude of the yearning spirit of the realization of the presence of God in all things and beings of the universe as the underlying and sustaining supreme reality as personal God who is to be worshipped with single-minded devotion is *bhakti* through which God's grace can be attained easily. We find the introduction of such a theistic system of thought in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* establishing the belief in a personal God whose grace is to be obtained by *bhakti* or single-minded devotion rather than realization of an impersonal Absolute *brahman* by constant meditation and *jñāna* or knowledge. Similarly in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* we find specific mention of Kṛṣṇa of the Sāivata or Vṛṣṇi clan, son of Devakī and pupil of Ghora Āṅgirasa, prescribing *tapas*, *dāna*, *ārjava*, *ahimsā*, *satyavacana* as great virtues to be practised by the seekers of truth and God. The same virtues are also prescribed to be practised in the *Gītā* in describing the characteristics of *sthitaprajña* in the verses from 56 to 72 in the second chapter and in describing the characteristics of *jñāni* or means of *jñāna-sādhana* in the verses from 7 to 11 in chapter 13 and also in many other verses in other chapters. This doctrine of *bhakti* or single-minded devotion to God and God's grace bestowed upon the faithful because *bhakti* is found in the later Upaniṣads. In the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* we find: The self cannot be realized by the study of the Vedas, nor by intelligence, nor by deep learning; It can be realized by him only whom It chooses or favours, to him the Self reveals Its own nature. In *Śvetaśvatara Upaniṣad* the doctrine of grace and the doctrine of *prapatti* or self-surrender form the basis of the cult of *bhakti.* Gradually the impersonal *brahman* of the Upaniṣads becomes identified with the personal God or Īśvara of the *bhakti* cult. This is the Bhāgavata religion with the firm belief and conviction of the omnipotent, omniscient, kind and benevolent God as creator, sustainer and dispenser of justice of all things and beings of the Universe who is to be worshipped with love and devotion. This Bhāgavata religion found its systematic exposition in *Śrīmad-bhāgavata*, *Harivaṃśa*, *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*, *Mahābhārata*, *Nārada Sūtra*, *Śāṇḍilya Sūtra*, and other Purāṇas. In the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* we find the identification of the personal god Hari or Viṣṇu with the Absolute *brahman* or Universal soul. Thus the absolute of metaphysics was identified and reconciled with the personal god of religion whom we can love, admire and worship and who is also communicative and responsive to our earnest devotion and aspirations.

Another development in the historical process of evolution of religious thought and practices to be noted was the attitude of harmonious reconciliation between the orthodox Brahmanism of Vedic cult with the spirit and teachings of the Bhāgavata Vaiṣṇava religion, which was for practical purposes a reconciliation or synthetic approach of recognition and adoption of the prescriptions of the *Smṛtis*, *Gṛhya Sūtras* and the Purāṇas for maintaining the much needed link of the Vedic cult of essential rites and rituals with the theology and practices of the new sects of Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, and the like as the new sects did not like to break away from the mainstream of Sanātana Vedic *dharma* or cult. This synthesis found expression in the theological concept of Trimūrti or the three manifestations of the same Supreme Reality as Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa. There was also another trend and practice of following the traditional Brahmanical religion adoring and worshipping the different gods of the Vedic pantheon and the Purāṇas as the manifestations of only One and the Supreme God who is omnipresent and worship of any God with sincerity and devotion is ultimately the worship of the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa as has been very well explained in several verses of the *Gītā*, *Bhāgavata* and the Purāṇas. Similarly the regular worship of the five gods, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Durgā, Sūrya and Gaṇeśa or the daily Pañca Devatā Pūjā enjoined as *nityakarma* is to be performed in this spirit. The observance of the necessary obligatory duties of *nitya* and *naimittika karmas* are to be made as per Śāstric injunctions, the transgression of which will incur disfavour of God and the deviated will not be recognised as a Vaiṣṇava or the follower of the Vaiṣṇava cult. Thus in the process of systematization and development of the Vaiṣṇava cult we find the *samuccaya* doctrine of the synthesis of traditional Vedic cult with its necessary rites and rituals as prescribed in the *smṛtis* with the fundamental essence of *ekaśaraṇa* or surrender to one and only one supreme God or Viṣṇu with single-minded devotion of Vaiṣṇavism.

This introduction is considered necessary for proper understanding and appreciation of the Vaiṣṇava cult which was preached and propagated by Mahāpuruṣa Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva, Śrī Deva Dāmodara, Śrī Harideva and their disciples in the eastern region of India during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The cult of Vaiṣṇavism was prevalent in Assam before the advent of these great leaders as is evidenced by the historical monuments, inscriptions and Thāns and such other records. These great leaders organised and systematized the Vaiṣṇava religion with institutions and organizations and gave the much needed mass base and made it a popular religion and cultural medium.

Śrī Deva Dāmodara was a great preacher and propagator of Vaiṣṇava religion of Brahma Saṃhati or Brahma Saṃpradāya in Assam and Cooch Behar, now a part of West Bengal. Śrī Deva Dāmodara was born in the year AD 1488 in the district of Nowgong in a village which was then called Nalacha or Nalancha near Bardowa which was the birthplace of Mahāpuruṣa Śrī Śaṅkaradeva, the great Vaiṣṇava preacher and leader of the neo-Vaiṣṇava religion in Assam. Dvija Sadānanda was originally an inhabitant of village Ratneswar or Ratnapur near the Hājo Hayagrīva Mādhava temple of Kāmarūpa and he was brought to Nalacha with his family by the then Ahom ruler. Sarveśvara and Ratnākara, two elder brothers of Dāmodaradeva, were born at Ratneswar before Sadānanda shifted to Nalacha in the district of Nowgong. Dvija Sadānanda was a learned Sanskrit scholar and was a great admirer of Mahāpuruṣa Śaṅkaradeva. Śrī Śaṅkaradeva had just returned from his long pilgrimage of twelve years visiting almost all the holy places and *tīrthas* all over India when Śrī Dāmodara Deva was born, and biographers of Śrī Dāmodara maintain that Śrī Śaṅkaradeva went to the place of his associate Dvija Sadānanda to see the baby born to him and named the baby Dāmodara and he was named accordingly by his father. Śrī Dāmodara was much younger than Śrī Śaṅkaradeva and by the time Śrī Dāmodara Deva came to be of age Śrī Śaṅkaradeva was known far and wide as the great preacher of Vaiṣṇava religion in Assam, besides being a great poet and social reformer. Śrī Deva Dāmodara came in close contact with the great Vaiṣṇava leader Śrī Śaṅkaradeva as his father Dvija Sadānanda was a great admirer and close associate of Mahāpuruṣa Śrī Śaṅkaradeva. Śrī Deva Dāmodara was initiated with sacred thread as per Vedic rites at the age of eight, and Dvija Sadānanda himself took all care to make him educated as he did in case or his other two sons also. Dvija Sadānanda himself was a great scholar, well versed in classical literature including the Upaniṣads and Purāṇas and Deva Dāmodara got his preliminary education from his father. A great Brāhmaṇa scholar named Kalāp Chandra Bhaṭṭācārya from Navadvīpa came to Assam for pilgrimage at the Kāmākhyā temple and came to the residence of Dvija Sadānanda after visiting Kāmākhyā, hearing about his reputation as a great scholar. Dvija Sadānanda persuaded the pundit Kalāp Chandra Bhaṭṭāchārya to remain in his place for some time and to establish a *ṭol* for imparting instructions to the students of the area. Śrī Deva Dāmodara and his two elder brothers were entrusted to his charge for education and the *ṭol* soon became a great centre of learning. Śrī Deva Dāmodara was of very sharp intellect and within a short time he could master the four Vedas and the fourteen *śāstras* as narrated by the biographers. He studied the Upaniṣads, the *Gītā* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and specialised in these *śāstras* and later on became a great exponent of *Bhāgavata*. After completing his studies Deva Dāmodara got married and settled as a householder. His father Dvija Sadānanda died after his marriage. His eldest brother Sarveśvara was childless and while going to Banaras on pilgrimage died on the bank of holy Ganges. His other brother Ratnākara also died soon after leaving two sons Krishna and Mukunda and his mother Śuśīlā Devī also died being affiliated with these successive bereavements. Deva Dāmodara bore these domestic calamities with great patience bearing in mind the great teachings of the *Gītā* and *Bhāgavata* which were the unfailing sources of his inspiration and guidance in life as described by the biographers.

During this period there was trouble and repression perpetrated by the then Ahom ruler Chuhungmung regarding some elephant-catching operation. The Bhuiyās of which Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva was the most illustrious scion fell into disfavour and animosity of the rulers and Hari, the son-in-law of Śrī Śaṅkaradeva, was put to death by the king. Apprehending further trouble and repression and to avoid further persecution in the hands of the rulers Śrī Śaṅkaradeva with his trusted followers left Bardowa and sailed downwards by the river Brahmaputra towards Kāmarūpa. Śrī Śaṅkaradeva before his departure to Kāmarūpa met Śrī Deva Dāmodara and asked him also to leave the place. Suśīlā Devī, mother of Deva Dāmodara had died a few days ago and Deva Dāmodara was observing the period of pollution of his mother's death and planned to shift to Kāmarūpa after performing the *śrāddha* and other rites and rituals of the dead mother. Śrī Deva Dāmodara came down to Kāmarūpa after about six months of Śrī Śaṅkaradeva's leaving the place. Śrī Deva Dāmodara at first came to his native village Ratneswar near Hajo temple and stayed there for some period. He visited the Hayagrīva Mādhava temple every day and came in contact with one *siddha* or enlightened ascetic Vāsudeva of Orissa and obtained spiritual knowledge and *dīkṣā* in Vaiṣṇava tantric *mantra*. This *sannyāsī* is said to be the Guru or preceptor of Śrī Deva Dāmodara. Some biographers of Mahāpuruṣa Śrī Śaṅkaradeva differ as to the identity of Deva Dāmodara's preceptor, but all the biographers of Dāmodara and the followers of the Dāmodarīya Vaiṣṇava cult accept and believe this version that Guru Deva Dāmodara received *tattvajñāna* and initiation from one *siddha sannyāsī* at the Maṇikuṭa of Hajo Hayagrīva Mādhava temple.

Śrī Deva Dāmodara came in contact with Śrī Caitanya Deva at Hajo Hayagrīva Mādhava temple in the year 1505. Śrī Caitanya Deva was till then Nimāi Pundit and he was not till then initiated in *sannyāsa*. Śrī Caitanya Deva was initiated into *sannyāsa* by Keśava Bhārati in the year 1509. Śrī Caitanya Deva was a great Sanskrit scholar and Deva Dāmodara met him every day during his stay at Hajo temple and they became great admirers of each other. Deva Dāmodara did not meet Śrī Caitanya Deva afterwards but they remembered each other and Śrī Caitanya Deva sent the book

Śaraṇa Samhitā in Sanskrit to Śrī Deva Dāmodara through a Brāhmaṇa pundit Ramram.

After receiving *tattvajñāna* and *dīkṣā* at Hajo Śrī Deva Dāmodara left his ancestral village Ratneswar and proceeded further west towards Barpeta and reached the village Patbausi or Vyaspara. Śrī Deva Dāmodara could learn there that Mahāpuruṣa Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva had settled at Baralchung near Barpeta at that time and Deva Dāmodara was very much delighted to meet him again after his departure from Bardowa.

Deva Dāmodara was much younger than Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva by about thirty-eight years but they were great admirers of each other. Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva was often referred to as Mahāpuruṣa by Deva Dāmodara and Śrī Śaṅkaradeva also referred to Deva Dāmodara very respectfully. Another great Vaiṣṇava Guru Śrī Harideva was also residing in his *satra* at Maneri by that time and thus the three great *gurus* or preachers and propagators of Bhagavati Vaiṣṇava *dharma* in Assam lived and flourished in the same area with great mutual admiration and respect for each other and virtually converted the locality into a holy place for the followers of Vaiṣṇava religion. They had often religious discourses together in their places and discussed the great Vaiṣṇava texts specially the *Śrīmadbhāgavata* with explanations and expositions in which the devoted disciples and the faithful congregated in large numbers. All these three *gurus* preached and propagated the same Śuddha Bhagavati Vaiṣṇava cult as laid down in the great Purāṇa *Śrīmadbhāgavata* and the *Gītā* which were recognized as the quintessence of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* was often mentioned as the *Purāṇa Sūrya Mahābhāgavata*.

Deva Dāmodara had another bereavement in this place as his wife and daughter died and he was left without any family encumbrance. He did not enter into family life again and engrossed himself in spiritual and religious pursuits and service of God according to the *bhakti* cult. He was a great scholar and was well-versed in the Upaniṣads, *Bhāgavata*, *Gītā* and other Purāṇas and Dharma Śāstras. He realised the essence of true religion as propounded in the *Bhāgavata* and other Vaiṣṇava texts and preached and practised single-minded devotion, dedication to and worship of Lord Kṛṣṇa which is the *sacchidānanda vigraha*, the Absolute Reality manifesting himself in all things and beings of the Universe, the indweller and controller of all beings, the creator, sustainer and moral governor of all that is.

Śrī Deva Dāmodara ultimately settled permanently at Patbausi and established the Patbausi *satra* in the year AD 1540 or 1462 Śaka. This was the first *satra* in Assam as proper *satra* institution, and Deva Dāmodara was the first founder of the *satra* and the *satra* system organization for dissemination of spiritual knowledge and religion and also as centre of social, administrative and cultural activities. He planned the *satra* in the pattern of Naimiṣāraṇya Satra as described in the *Bhāgavata* with Manikut, Namghar, Hatis or residences of the disciples and devotees, a massive gate and a pond. This Patbausi Satra was the central or Ādi Satra of Deva Dāmodara from which he preached and propagated the Bhagavatī Vaiṣṇava cult throughout Assam establishing subsidiary *satras* and appointing *adhikārīs* or chiefs of those *satras*. Later on in the year Śaka 1669 Ahom king Pramatta Singha constructed a temple in this place. There were similar *namghars*, also called *kīrtana-ghars*, in the other *satras* of Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva and Harideva and all the three Vaiṣṇava *gurus* assembled occasionally in either of the *satras*, had religious discussions and discourses, *nāmaprasaṅgas* and enjoyed each others associations or *saṅgas*.

The chief disciples of Deva Dāmodara were Bhaṭṭadeva, Baṅṣīgopāla or Deugopal, Bhagavāndeva, Gopāla Miśra Kaviratna, Baladeva, Śāntabhuṣana Arjunadeva, Manoharadeva, Nārāyaṇadeva, Paramānanda, Jadumaṇideva, Bhagavat Miśra and many others. The disciples mentioned above were also great scholars and some of them wrote many books on religious matters and translated the great Vaiṣṇava authoritative texts into Assamese. Mahāpuruṣa Śrī Śaṅkaradeva and his chief disciple Śrī Mādhavadeva were great scholars and specially Śrī Śaṅkaradeva was a great poet and a prolific writer who composed a lot of books in simple Assamese verses narrating the glories of Lord Kṛṣṇa as found in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and also wrote some books in Sanskrit. The *Kīrtana Ghoṣā*, *Daśamaskandha Bhāgavata*, *Niminavasiddha*, *Valicalana*, and the *Ankiya Naṭas*, *Bargītas*, *Bhakti-ratnākara* etc. are some of Śrī Śaṅkaradeva's monumental works. Śrī Mādhavadeva also wrote philosophico-religious books like the *Nāmaghoṣā*, *Bhakti-ratnāvalī*, *Bargītas* etc. Śrī Dāmodara Deva was not a writer and had no books of his own, but he inspired his disciples specially the great writer Śrī Vaikuṇṭha Bhagavatī or Bhaṭṭadeva who was also a great Sanskrit scholar. Many books written by Śrī Bhaṭṭadeva are said to be not yet traced, and among the books found uptil now written by Bhaṭṭadeva the following are important: *Kathā Bhāgavata*, *Kathā Gītā*, *Kathā-bhakti-ratnāvalī*, *Sātvata-tantra*, *Prasaṅgamālā*, *Viṣṇu-Śahasra nāma*, *Nandotsava*, *Guru-vaṁśāvalī*, *Dāmodara Vākhyāna*, *Bhāgavat-adhikāra*, *Bhakti-viveka*, *Bhaktisāra*, *Śantinirṇaya*. Of these *Dāmodara Vākhyāna*, *Bhagavat-adhikāra*, *Śaraṇa-mālikā* or *Śaraṇa-saṅgraha*, *Bhakti-viveka*, *Bhaktisāra* are in Sanskrit and *Kathā Bhāgavata*, *Kathā gītā* and *Kathā-bhakti-ratnāvalī* are in simple Assamese prose. Śrī Bhaṭṭadeva is said to be the first prose writer in modern Indian languages and has been recognized as such by the great scholars and linguistics of India. Śrī Kapiladeva, Bhagavat Miśra, Gopāla Miśra Kaviratna were also some of the disciples of Deva Dāmodara who were writers of many valuable books. *Ghoṣa-ratna* of Śrī Gopāla Miśra Kaviratna is one such important book on Vaiṣṇavism.

These disciples of Śrī Deva Dāmodara established *satras* in the pattern of Patbausi and preached and propagated the Bhāgavati Vaiṣṇava religion as advised by Deva Dāmodara. Thus all over Assam the Bhagavati Vaiṣṇava *dharma* of the Dāmodarīya cult was disseminated and the largest number of Hindus in Assam belong to this Dāmodarīya sect or *sampradāya*. The main three sects or *sampradāyas* of Vaiṣṇavism in Assam are named after their *gurus* and thus the followers of Śrī Śaṅkaradeva Mahāpuruṣa are known as Mahāpuruṣīyās, the followers of Deva Dāmodara as Dāmodarīyas and the followers of Śrī Harideva are known as Haridevis.

The Patbausi Satra of Guru Deva Dāmodara was the main and central *satra* or monastery and soon it became a great centre of learning of religious matters and a holy place in which people from all parts of the state assembled in the religious congregations for attending the *nāma-prasaṅgas* and hearing the expositions and recitations of the *Bhāgavata*. Similar daily activities were also held in the other *satras* established by the disciples appointed as *adhikārīs* by Śrī Deva Dāmodara and also in the village *nāmghars* or village community prayer halls where though no *satra* was organised. These activities were not only confined to the Dāmodarīya *satras*; similar religious, cultural, social welfare and even administrative activities were held even with more earnestness, sincerity and regularity in the Mahāpuruṣīya *satras* and *nāmghars*.

The religion preached by Deva Dāmodara soon became very popular as it was to a great extent liberal and was in conformity with the prevailing Vedic rites and traditions as prescribed in the *smṛtis* and *saṃhitās*. We shall discuss later on the chief tenets of the religious teachings of Deva Dāmodara.

The great Vaiṣṇava religious wave that swept over the land by the introduction and propagation of the new Vaiṣṇava Ekaśaraṇīya religion put a great check on the observance of the Śākta Pūjās with animal sacrifice and such other customary and local traditions and beliefs. There was a sense of revolt against the elaborate and cumbersome religious rites and rituals and mass people were more attracted to the neo-Vaiṣṇava cult preached by the three *gurus* with its simplicity and easily understandable rationality behind the prescribed observances of *nāma-prasaṅgas* with devotion to God. The religion thus preached and propagated by the disciples of Śrī Deva Dāmodara got obstructions from some interested quarters; but they were unsuccessful to check the new wave that swept over the land. A group of such jealous self-seekers began to spread malice and hatred against the Vaiṣṇavas and complained to the Koch king Śrī Parikṣit Nārāyaṇa against Śrī Deva Dāmodara that he had polluted the minds of the people of his kingdom by preaching and practising all sorts of anti-religious activities and at his behest the people have abandoned their usual traditional Vedic and customary religious activities hitherto observed like worship of Durgā Devī, performance of *śrāddhas* of departed parents and relatives, sacrifice of goats in the altar of Durgā Devī and Kālī and the such. Stoppage of such religious activities, they pleaded, will incur the wrath and disfavour of great Mother Durgā and Kālī and the people will suffer from terrible calamities in the shape of epidemics, and other natural calamities. They also cautioned the king that for allowing such anti-religious activities the king as the guardian of the people will also incur the wrath of the Great Goddess and other gods and ultimately he and his dependents will also suffer. Kāmeśvara Giri and Sibabar Daivajña took the lead of such group of malicious persons and as they were receiving patronage of the Koch king Parīkṣit Nārāyaṇa they had access to the king and his high officers and repeatedly insisting on the king to take early action against Deva Dāmodara ultimately succeeded in convincing the king about the activities of Śrī Deva Dāmodara as against the traditional beliefs and customs in asking the people not to offer any worship to goddess Kāmākhyā, Durgā Devī, Mahākālī and the such, and ordered his royal *dhopdharas* or executive officers to go to place of Deva Dāmodara and to serve the order on him to the effect that he may continue to stay there in his place provided he agrees to worship Devī Durgā by offering usual sacrifices and if he does not agree to do that, then he is to be arrested and brought to this court for trial against his heretical activities. The emissaries of the king served the order of the king on Śrī Deva Dāmodara politely in his *satra* and waited for his reply. Hearing the order of the king Deva Dāmodara with a composed and unperturbed mind gave his reply on the charges to the kings' emissaries to the effect that he worships Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa who is the Lord of the three worlds and how can he worship any other God. He will not offer any animal sacrifice to any god or goddess even though he may be put to death for so doing. His neck will be placed over the neck of the animal brought to be sacrificed and if you have strength enough you cut the sacrificial animal. I will rather go to the king and the court but I shall not be able to worship any other god or goddess besides my supreme Lord Viṣṇu or Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa. Having said so Guru Deva Dāmodara made immediate preparations to proceed to Vijayanagara, the capital of the then Koch king Parikṣit Nārāyana.

Śrī Deva Dāmodara summoned the chief disciples and the *adhikārīs* of the nearby *satras* to his place and advised them regarding the management of the *satras* and conducting the usual prayers, *Bhāgavata* recitation and exposition, the daily *nitya karmas* like Sandhyā, Gāyatrī and the *naimittika karmas* as per occasion, the three *prasaṅgas* and the such. Śrī Bhaṭṭadeva was at Barnagar at that time and though he was the most learned and trusted devotee of Deva Dāmodara, due to his absence in the *satra* he did not wait for his arrival and appointed his old disciple Hari Das Ata to conduct the activities of the Patbausi *satra* and started for Vijayanagara with twelve disciples and sixty devotees who could not be dissuaded to stay behind. Śrī Bhaṭṭadeva met him on his way to Vijayanagara and Guru Deva Dāmodara appointed him Bhagavati of the Satra and asked him to write a book on *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* in simple Assamese prose so that it may be understood by all. In this connection he said to Bhaṭṭadeva that Mahāpuruṣa has already composed the *Daśa Skandha Bhāgavata*, *Kīrtana Bhattima* etc. in beautiful verses in *chhanda*, Deva Dāmodara asked Bhaṭṭadeva to prepare the *Kathābhāgavata* making it more simpler than those of the Mahāpuruṣa (*tāto kari sugama kario bhāgavata*). Bhaṭṭadeva accepted the command of the *guru* and bowing down at his feet and taking blessings returned to Barnagar and set himself to the task as commanded by the *guru.*

On his arrival at Vijaynagara the conspirators Sibabar and Kameśvara offered to take the *guru* and his devotees to their place and requested the king to allow them to be the host of the party. The king agreed and the two malicious and evil minded cunnings took the opportunity to malign and spread slander against the great religious leader and his followers. They requested the *guru* and the *bhaktas* to leave the utensils used for cooking their food and the plantain leaves used as dishes for taking meal in the night of their arrival at the capital and requested them to retire and sleep as they are all fatigued by the long journey and to do them the favour to serve them by cleaning the utensils and removing the leaves which will bestow on them immense pleasure and bliss. This was a very common custom in Assam and guests were never allowed to clean the utensils in which they took food in household families and family members usually used to do it with delight as sacred duty of serving the guests except in special circumstances where the guests were of lower castes in respect of the host family in those days though by now this has also been very much relaxed with the spread of modern education. The two conspirators drove some cows into the place used as kitchen by the followers of Deva Dāmodara when they were in deep sleep and informed the king and his officers to see with their own eyes unworthy conduct and irreligious behaviour of the followers of the *guru.* But the king and the officers could see through the game and did not believe in their words and Deva Dāmodara coming to know of this matter decided not to reside in their place any further and as arranged by some good officers of the king, Deva Dāmodara and his devotees shifted to the place of Bedua Brahmin who was well versed in the Vedas (Vedajña, Bedua Brahmin as he was called), who received them with due respect and honour.

In the place of Bedua Brahmin people assembled in large numbers as days passed by to have the *darśana* and blessings of the Guru Deva Dāmodara and to attend in the congregations of daily *nām prasaṅgas* which the *guru* led every day as usual in the *satras.* King Parīkṣit Nārāyaṇa who was not in much favour of the *guru* was not very much pleased at the popularity he commanded and soon arranged for his trial in his court and for this purpose invited a host of Brāhmaṇa pundits who were considered to be well versed in the *śāstras* and religious texts of Sanātana Hindu religion. Deva Dāmodara was accordingly summoned to the court attended by the learned scholars of renown and on arriving in the court took his seat on the *kuśāsanas* spread by his devotees instead of taking his seat offered by the king. The trial began and as earlier arranged the appointed pundits asked Deva Dāmodara as to why he did not offer sacrifices and did not worship goddess Durgā, Kālī, Kāmākhyā, and why he was not in favour of *yāga-yajñas*, *tīrtha darśanas* and such other traditional and customary religious performances and activities.

Deva Dāmodara addressing the king and the learned scholars explained in clearest terms the Śāstric injunctions in support of his preaching and practice of worshipping Lord Vāsudeva Śrī Kṛṣṇa who is the ultimate supreme and only reality quoting copious verses and texts from the *Śrīmadbhāgavata*, *Gītā*, *Nārada-sūtra*, *Śāṇḍilya-sūtra*, *Bṛhat-nāradīya-purāṇa*, *Sātvata-tantra*, Upaniṣads, *Mahābhārata* and the such and established the efficacy and supremacy of Bhāgavata Dharma with devotional cult of worship as the best form of worship of God in the present age. He also explained the efficacy of the nine stages of *bhakti* or forms of devotion according to the progress or spiritual attainments of the devotees beginning with *śravaṇa* and *kīrtaṇa* as the safest and easiest method of worship of God without any malice to other forms of worship and with strict adherence to non-injury to any being. He concluded his replies to the charges with an appeal to the king and those present in the court to be converted into the fold of Vaiṣṇavism, to attain *abhyudaya* or prosperity here and Nihśresas or *summum bonum* hereafter.

The galaxy of learned pundits or Śāstric scholars were all charmed and speechless hearing Śrī Deva Dāmodara for his vast knowledge, conviction and scholarship. The king then asked the pundits invited to hear and judge the conduct of Deva Dāmodara as to whether the citations and narrations made in his support by Deva Dāmodara were actually of the religious *śāstras* or were of his own coining or from texts not to be considered as authoritative religious texts. The pundits remained silent for some time as they had nothing to say against Deva Dāmodara's quotations about their genuineness and authority. Then breaking the silence Jadumani Chakravarty, one of the learned scholars invited to the court said that the quotations and narrations made by Śrī Deva Dāmodara were all from the religious *śāstras* he has mentioned and supported the teachings and preachings of the *guru* as in conformity with the Hindu *śāstras* and further quoted certain passages from the *Bhāgavata* and *Mahābhārata* wherein Vidura was advised to practise *śravaṇa-kirtaṇa* for self-realization and supported Shri Deva Dāmodara and his views.

The king praised Deva Dāmodara in the court and apologized for the trouble he had to undergo. Deva Dāmodara was absolved of all the charges and he became all the more popular and commanded reference from all sections of the people. Deva Dāmodara stayed in the place of Bedua Brahmin for more than a year in the capital of Vijaynagara and often he had to postpone his plan of return to Patbausi at the request of his newly converted disciples and devotees. The gathering of people coming to have his *darśana* and blessings increased day by day and the place of Bedua Brahmin became like a place of pilgrimage. People came with offerings of *naivedyas* and articles of food for the devotees and attending the *nām prasaṅgas* and *Bhāgavat* recitations derived great pleasure and satisfaction. One day some ladies of the palace of the king came with rich presents and offered them at the feet of the *guru* and prayed for his blessings. The *gurn* bestowed *āśīrvāda* or blessings on them and they took their seat at the side of the congregation and attended the *nāma prasaṅga* conducted there and thus they remained there for hours forgetting to return to the palace early. At the end of the *nāma prasaṅga* the *prāsād* or the offerings made by the people to God in the congregation were distributed to the people assembled there and thus every body was eager to have his share in the huge gathering. King Parikṣit happened to pass by that way in the evening returning home from his hunting and asked why there had been such a huge gathering of people. The malicious Sibabar and Kāmeśvaṛa got another opportunity to take revenge against Deva Dāmodara and his devotees and reported to the king with all exaggerations that the officers of his court had been neglecting their duties and were attending the prayer meetings of Deva Dāmodara and even the ladies of the palace secretly attended the prayers and pointed to the ladies of the palace who accidentally attended only on that day, and that the subjects of his kingdom had ceased to perform the Devī Pūjās being influenced by that Deva Dāmodara and so on and pleaded to do something before things went out of control. The king was annoyed at the presence of the female inmates of his palace in this public place and he was very much upset though he did not say anything on that moment. The king ultimately decided to exile Deva Dāmodara from his kingdom and ordered Deva Dāmodara to leave the Kāmarūpa kingdom and ordered his executive officers and ministers to take to the other bank of river Sonkosh which was the boundary between the Kāmrūpa and Cooch Behar kingdoms of those kings at that time. The messengers of the king served the order of expulsion of Deva Dāmodara from the kingdom of Kāmarūpa in the morning when Deva Dāmodara was in the morning *prasaṅga* and he immediately concluded the prayers and asked his disciples and devotees to pack up immediately for leaving the place as ordered by the king. Deva Dāmodara politely refused to accept the gift of clothes and money which the king sent through the messengers and bidding farewell to Bedua Vipra, he with his disciples and devotees started towards Cocch Behar on foot. He requested Bedua Brahmin to look after the *satra* he temporarily established there. A large number of subjects started following the guru with tearful years and Deva Dāmodara bade them all a touching farewell. Deva Dāmodara was pining for return to his beloved *satra* at Patbausi and now being exiled from the country and having no hope of seeing his Patbausi *satra* again felt very sad. He had to undergo such repressions because of preaching and propagating the pure Vaiṣṇava religion and bore all these sufferings as blessings of the Lord. After three days Śrī Deva Dāmodara reached the bank of Sonkosh river in the evening and stayed the night there. Śrī Deva Dāmodara did not touch any food or water during these three days as it was the kingdom of Parikṣit Nārāyaṇa who had expelled him from his country and as the things of food and drink also belong to him in a way. Next day in the morning Deva Dāmodara arranged to cross over to Cooch Behar the kingdom of Lakṣmīnārāyana, the son of the great king Mahāraj Naranārāyaṇa. On hearing the news of exile of the *guru* from the kingdom of Kāmarūpa at Patbausi, the disciples headed by Bhaṭṭadeva started to meet the *guru* before he crossed over to Cooch Behar and met him just before his embarking on the boat to cross the river Sonkosh. Śrī Bhaṭṭadeva showed him the first chapter of the *Bhāgavata* which he had rendered into Assamese prose and the *guru* finding the work done rather elaborately with notes and explanations, asked Bhaṭṭadeva to be brief giving only the essence and substance of the teachings of the *Bhāgavata*. Śrī Bhaṭṭadeva took the dust of his feet and returned to Patbausi to complete the work as ordained by the *guru*. The boat left for the other bank of the river Sonkosh and with a grivous heart Deva Dāmodara took a handful of water of the river Sonkosh and placed his head with the words "from this day I leave Kāmarūpa". It was evening when Deva Dāmodara and his party proceeded only a few miles crossing over the river Sonkosh and finding a household family the fatigued and tired *bhaktas* desired to spend the night in his place but finding hens and pigs in the house they were disappointed and wanted to proceed further. The head of the family seeing the *guru* and his disciples saluted them taking them to be saints and wise men. The *guru* said that they desired to be his guest for the night and knowing the reservations of the guests regarding rearing of hens and pigs, he removed them all from the surroundings and cleansed the house washing it in proper manner. The family also arranged for their meal and offered the materials for cooking and the articles of food to be cooked. Observing their further reservations to cook food and knowing the facts of their journey and their identity, and knowing further that the Vaiṣṇavas are not used to take food in the house who has not been initiated by Śaraṇa to Lord Kṛṣṇa, the head of the family immediately arranged to be initiated with his entire family and Deva Dāmodara initiated him in Vaiṣṇavism, though he belonged to a lower caste in social status. There is no caste question for taking Śaraṇa in Viṣṇu and practising Bhāgavata Dharma with devotion. Deva Dāmodara spent some days in this village before leaving for the capital of the king in Cooch Behar.

King Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa hearing that Guru Deva Dāmodara left Kāmarūpa and had come to his place was very much delighted and arranged to receive him in the capital with due honour. He sent a batch of officers to escort Deva Dāmodara to his capital and on his arrival the king was charmed at the personality and dignified appearance of the aged *guru* and kept him in his palace for some time. The king constructed a *satra* for the *guru* on the bank of river Garhat and donated a land grant of 377 *bighās* for maintenance of the *satra*. The *satra* was established in the pattern of his original Patbausi *satra* and Deva Dāmodara performed the *nāma prasaṅgas* regularly, had recitations and expositions of the *Bhāgavata* and such other religious observances prescribed to be observed in the *satras.* From this *satra* Deva Dāmodara began preaching the Śuddha Bhagavati Dharma in the locality and in Assam giving directions and advices to his disciples who were entrusted with the affairs of the *satras* all over Assam. Deva Dāmodara left Kāmarūpa and entered Cooch Behar in the year Śaka 1515 or AD 1593 and at that time Puruṣottama Thakur, grandson of Mahāpuruṣa Śaṅkara Deva was at Bhella and Mādhavadeva was at Madhupur in Cooch Behar. King Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa with his family was given *śaraṇa* by Deva Dāmodara as stated by the biographers and a host of officers of the king and other elites were initiated in the *satra* of Deva Dāmodara. Deva Dāmodara lived in Cooch Behar for about six years in this *satra* which was called Vaikunthapur and breathed his last there in the year Śaka 1520 or AD 1598.

Understanding that his end was approaching he summoned the chief disciples and *adhikārīs* of the *satras* to his place at Cooch Behar and appointed Bhaṭṭadeva as the *adhikārī* of Patbausi *satra* in preference to his nephew Krishna whom he considered to be incapable of conducting the affairs of the *satra* and advised the disciples and devotees to observe the rites, rituals, obligatory duties, *nitya* and *naimittika karmas*, the daily *prasaṅgas* in the *satras* and other duties. On the day he breathed his last he could not attend the usual *Bhāgavatā pāṭha* and enquired as to whether the *pāṭha* (reading) has been concluded and the devotees being curious of his repeated enquiries closed the *pāṭha* and all went to his bedside. Deva Dāmodara gave them some advise to work together and reciting the names of Rāma, Kṛṣṇa-Hari closed his eyes and that was the end of the eventful life of Guru Deva Dāmodara.

As regards the fundamental teachings of Deva Dāmodara in his propagation of the *bhakti* cult, it may be said that all three Vaiṣṇava *gurus* in medieval Assam, Mahāpuruṣa Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva, Deva Dāmodara and Harideva, preached and propagated the same Śuddha Bhagavati Vaiṣṇava dharma as propounded and established in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*, *Harivaṁśa*, *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, *Śāṇḍilya Sūtra*, *Sātvata Tantra* and such other Vaiṣṇava texts. The three *gurus* of Assam depended more on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and the *Gītā* and their commentaries specially made by that of Śrīdharasvāmī. So the teachings of Deva Dāmodara in his preaching the *bhakti* cult in Assam is the same as that of *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and the *Gītā*. The family in which Deva Dāmodara was born had Vaiṣṇava tradition and culture. The family had its original home at village Ratneswar near the Hajo Hayagrīva Mādhava temple which is a Vaiṣṇava temple with Viṣṇu as the deity in the manifestation of Hayagrīva and every day the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* was recited in the temple. Śrī Ratna Kandali, father of the great poet Ananta Kandali was the *Bhāgavata pāṭhaka* (reader) in the Mādhava temple for a long time. Dvija Sadānanda, father of Deva Dāmodara was also a learned scholar in Sanskrit and was well versed in the *Bhāgavata* and the Upaniṣads and Deva Dāmodara had his earlier education from his father before he read the Śāstras under Kalāp Chandra Bhaṭṭāchārya. Further, Deva Dāmodara was a very close associate and great admirer of Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva and he got impetus and inspiration as a proselytiser from Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva. Some of the modern followers of Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva even go so far as to maintain that Deva Dāmodara was a disciple of Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva. But none of the biographers of Deva Dāmodara, Śaṅkara Deva and other prominent proselytisers of Deva Dāmodara and Mahāpuruṣa Śaṅkaradeva mentioned about Deva Dāmodara being initiated by Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva. There is mention of one Kor Damodara, a peasant Brāhmaṇa who earned his living by cultivating his small plot of land with his spade and had to feed three widows, his mother, elder sister and sister-in-law, made by Ramcharan Thakur in his *Carita Punthi* and in the *Kathā Guru Carita*, and this Kor Dāmodara is said to be the son of one Dayāl. This peasant Brāhmaṇa has been said to be even ignorant of the custom of saluting the elders and did not know how to sit in a congregation. Because of the similarity of the name Dāmodara, a controversy was raised at some time confusing this Kor Dāmodara with the preacher and propagator Guru Deva Dāmodara. But nobody took it seriously and the learned followers of Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva and Deva Dāmodara have asserted and established that there had been no evidence whatsoever to suggest that Deva Dāmodara received initiation from Mahāpuruṣa Śaṅkaradeva though they were very closely associated and Mahāpuruṣa Śrī Śaṅkaradeva gave inspiration and impetus to Deva Dāmodara in his task of proselytisation. In the *Vaṁśīgopaladevar Carita* by Rāmānanda Dvija, *Buanji-vivekaratna* by Maniram Bhandar Barua and in all other biographies of Deva Dāmodara it has been stated that Deva Dāmodara was initiated in the cult and given *dikṣā mantra* by one Vāsudeva Vipra Sannyāsī of Orissa, and this is also the common belief of all the followers of the Dāmodarīya sect of Vaiṣṇavas in Assam.

As regards theology, nature of *bhakti* or devotion, means of practising devotion, kinds of *bhaktas* or devotees, obligatory duties to be performed by household devotees like *nitya* and *naimittika karmas*, the *summum bonum* of life, the virtues to be practised by the devotees, and duties to be performed in *varṇāśrama dharmas* and the such religious, ethical and social matters Deva Dāmodara instructed his disciples and specially the *adhikārīs* he appointed in the different *satras* for propagation of the cult in the code of conduct as prescribed in the *Bhāgavata* and the *smṛtis* of Sanātana Vedic religion. As has been stated earlier, the Dāmodarīya sect cannot be treated to be an independent sect altogether and religious tenets, observances of religious functions and customs were more or less identical with those of the two other sects. As a matter of fact there was no difference at all regarding the religious tenets and observances and performances of other rites and rituals in the sects of Dāmodarīya and Haridevi. These two sects were said to belong to the Brahma Saṃhati or Brahma Sampradāya of Vaiṣṇavism. The classification of the different sects of Vaiṣṇavism in Assam does not seem to conform to the traditional classifications of Śrī Brahma, Rudra and Catuḥsana Saṃhatis or *sampradāyas* of India as per their founders and succession of *gurus*. The Dāmodarīya and Haridevi sects were called Brahma Sampradāyas perhaps due to the predominance of and adherence to the Brahmanical elements and rites and rituals enjoined in the *smṛtis* and *saṁhitās* of Sanātana Vedic religion. The Mahāpuruṣīya sect of Vaiṣṇavism also had its split after the death of Mahāpuruṣa Śaṅkaradeva into Kāla Saṃhati, Puruṣa Saṃhati and Nika Saṃhati as sub-sects with some minor modifications in observances of religious customs and traditions.

Vaiṣṇavism as propounded in the *Bhāgavata*, *Gitā*, *Nārāyaṇiya Dharma* chapter of *Māhābhārata*, *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* and the such is a monotheistic devotional form of religion. Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa is the supreme reality and the beloved personal God who is to be worshipped with single-minded devotion and dedication in this religion. *Bhakti* is the means of attaining God's grace by which an individual *jiva* can attain bliss and eternal peace which is the *summum bonum* of life. In all devotional religions, there is a firm belief and conviction in the existence of a personal God as the creator, sustainer and moral governor of the universe and these beliefs and ideas generate the feelings and emotions of awe, admiration, reverence and the feeling of the numinous which culminates in the voluntary acts of devotion, prayer, dedication, worship and complete surrender with utmost trust that this beloved God alone will save him and sustain him in all situations of life he may be placed. This firm faith that due to this single-minded devotion to the supreme God everything will be realised and there is no other way or means for its attainment is the Ekaśaraṇabhāva as described in the *Bhāgavata* and the *Gītā* the basis and foundation of the Bhāgavata *dharma.* This may also be noted in this connection that all forms of devotional religion prescribe single-minded devotion to the God who is firmly believed to be the Supreme God the devotee worships. Thus we have the Viṣṇu *bhaktas*, Śiva *bhaktas* or Śākta *bhaktas* or Kālī *bhaktas* and the such. Thus though generally the attitude of *bhakti* is associated with Vaiṣṇavism, it equally holds good in any devotional religion in which a personal God or Goddess is worshipped with single-minded devotion by the *sādhaka* or the spiritual aspirant.

I have made an attempt to trace the historical process of development of the *bhakti* cult from the Upaniṣads which are the systematic expositions of the poetic expressions of the seeds of metaphysics and ethics. Thus the *Śrīmadbhāgavata*, which has been described in its opening benedictory verses as the celestial fruit of the *Nigama Kalpataru* or the Vedas contain the essence of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads. The *Śrīmadbhāgavata* has also been described to be the commentary of the *Brahmasūtra* or Vedānta. Therefore, the teachings of the *Bhāgavata* are in conformity with the eternal truths of the Vedas and for this reason it has often been said that the *Bhāgavata* is a *vedamulaku-grantha* or a treatise based on the Vedas. Thus the Vedic rite and rituals prescribed by the *Bhāgavata*, *Gītā* and such other Vaiṣṇava *śāstras* have the authority and the sanctity of Śāstric tradition and the followers of the Bhāgavata religion are to observe and perform them as obligatory duties. We find the Vedic rites and rituals prescribed by the Dāmodarīya cult of Vaiṣṇavas have the sanctions of the Dharma Śāstras based on the Vedas.

Deva Dāmodara prescribed the procedure of initiation of the disciples in the *satras* and also in the houses of the disciples who want to be initiated in their own houses, the duties and functions to be observed by the proselytiser and the disciple after initiation, the daily *nam prasaṅgas* to be observed in the *satras* which was twelve in number in three sittings usually and sixteen on Saṃkrāntis and on special occasions, the *nitya* and *naimittika karmas* to be observed by the disciples, specially by the Brāhmaṇa disciples and devotees in their minutest details for the uniformity and discipline of the order of the cult. These instructions of Deva Dāmodara were codified by his disciple Bhaṭṭadeva in the *Śaraṇa Mālikā* and other books. An image of Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa was to be installed in the Maṇikuṭa of the *satras* and all property of the *satra* technically belong to the Vigraha or the image who is the presiding deity of the *satra*. Bāla Gopāla, Madana Gopāla and such images connected with the *bālya-līlā* of Lord Kṛṣna were preferably installed in the *satras* of the Dāmodarīya cult and a Śālagrāma representing Viṣṇu in material form is also to be installed in the pedestal of the Maṇikuṭa for daily worship. Recitation and exposition of the *Bhāgavata* was a must in the *satra* every day and a Bhagavati was appointed to recite the *Bhāgavata* every day at the appointed hour.

A Vaiṣṇava is to be initiated by the head of the *satra* to be qualified for taking part in the religious functions and ceremonies. The process of initiation is called *śaraṇa* and *bhajana* and the disciple is given a *mantra* to be recited and meditated silently with due regard or *śraddhā*. In the Dāmodarīya cult besides administering *śaraṇa* and *bhajana* there is also the initiation by *dīkṣā* to Brāhmaṇa disciples in Vaiṣnava tantric *mantras*. In *dikṣā* Viṣṇu *homa* is also performed as a part of the ceremony.

The festivals of Janmāṣṭamī or the birth anniversary of Lord Kṛṣṇa is observed by all Vaiṣṇavas in the respective *satras* and the Dolotasava or Phalgutsava is observed on the full moon day and the month of Phālguna. The death anniversary of Guru Dāmodara Deva is oserved in all the Dāmodariya *satras* at present and it has continued from the death of Deva Dāmodara. There are some other festivals like Rāsa Pūjā, Ratha Yātrā, Jhulana Yātrā performed in some *satras* but not universally in all *satras*.

Of the five principal *bhakti rasas* such as *śānta*, *dāsya*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya* and *madhura*, Deva Dāmodara preached the *dāsya bhakti* or the loving service of God surrendering all actions performed as deeds of God with a conscious sense of dedication. The deeds are to be done without attachment or desire of their fruits. The deeds are to be done with a sense of *niṣkāma* and all the actions are to be offered to God. Such attitude of doing actions in a detached manner begets the fruits of *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana* which are the means of preparing the mind for *bhakti*. Dāmodara Deva like all other Vaiṣṇava preachers emphasises the nine kinds of *bhakti* as described in the 'Prahlāda Carita' of the *Bhāgavata* and his chief disciple Bhaṭṭadeva has very clearly explained the significance and practice of each of these nine *bhaktis* or rather the stages of *bhaktis* in his immortal work *Bhakti Viveka*. Of the nine kinds of *bhaktis*, *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana* are the safest, easiest and most effective in preparing the mind of the devotee and with the company of holy persons or Vaiṣṇavas the devotee will get the inclination to serve God and hear His glories. Thus *satsaṅga* or association of the holy person is to be sought by the aspirants in the path of *bhakti* and spiritual progress. Deva Dāmodara and other preachers have thus prescribed taking the *saṅga* or company of the *sādhu* or the holy person as the first step or probation for initiation to the cult of *bhakti* (*sādhu saṅga laiba prathamata*). *Bhakti* or single-minded devotion to God is that mental attitude, deep attachment to God, which is generated on the realization of the presence of Viṣṇu in all things and beings of the universe. This has been very well stated in the *Bṛhannāradīya Purāṇa* in the following verses:

Sarvadevamayo viṣṇurvidhinaitasya pūjanam
Iti yā manasāḥ prīti sā bhaktiḥ parikīrtitā:
Sarvabhūto mayo visṇuḥ paripūraṇah sanātanaḥ
Ityabhedaparā bhaktiḥ sā pūjā parikīrtitā.

Bhāgavata *dharma* is the realization of the presence of Bhāgavata Sattvā or existence of God everywhere. There can be no place where God's government does not extend. This has been explained in the *Bhāgavata* in the verses by Lord Kṛṣṇa addressing Uddhava:

Yāvat sarveṣu bhūteṣu madbhāvo no'pajāyate
Tāvadevam upāsita vāngmanaḥ kāyavṛttibhiḥ.
Ayam hi sarvakalpānām samīcino mato mama
Madbhavaḥ sarvabhūteṣu manovākyavṛīttibhiḥ.

The *Bhāgavata* has also prescribed the performance of the obligatory duties like the *nitya* and *naimittika karmas* in very clear terms:

Nitya naimitikañcaiva tathāvasyamevaca
Gṛhāśramī viṣṇubhaktaḥ karyāt kṛṣṇadhiyā smaraṇa.
Nācaret yastu vedoktam svayam ajño ajitendriyah
Vikarmaṇahyedharmena mṛtyormṛtyum upaiti.

The Vedic instructions as contained in the *śrutis* and *smṛtis* are ordained by God Himself and any body transgressing such duties are not Vaiṣṇavas even though they may be devoted to me as is said in the following verse:

Śruti smṛti mamaivajña ulaṅghya ya pravartate
Ajñācchedi mamadrohī madbhaktopi na vaiṣṇavaḥ.

In the *Gītā* also we find the same teaching to the effect that religion is of *codana lakṣaṇa* or is prescribed by the *śāstras* and those who indulge in religious activities according to their own liking violating the injunctions of the *śāstras* are only following Manodharmas or religion according to their own wishes without any authority.

Yaḥ śāstravidhimutsṛjya vartate kāmakārataḥ
Na sa siddhimavāpnoti na sukham na parām gatim. (16/23).

In the *Bhāgavata* we find similar instructions that an aspirant after liberation of the self shall not indulge in *kāmya karma* or deeds expecting fulfilment of worldly desires or actions forbidden by the *śāstras*, but he shall perform the obligatory duties like the *nitya* and *naimittika* works removing all impediments and without any apprehension of any undesirable consequences:

Mokṣārthi na pravarteta tatra kāmyanisiddhayoḥ
Nitya naimittikam kuryāt pratyavāya jihāyasā.
Vedoktaṁ eva kurvano niḥsango arpitamīśvare
Naiṣkarmyam labhate siddhim recanārthe phalaśrutim.

In the *Gītā* we find that God cannot be attained nor the grace of God can be expected by those who are unkind to their fellow beings or those who are averse or indifferent to the proper discharge of their own duties. The peace of mind or bliss can be attained by properly discharging one's allotted duties as we find in the following verses in the *Gītā*.

Sve sve karmaṇi abhirataḥ samsiddhim labhate naraḥ
Svakarmaniratah siddhim jathā vindati tatśṛṇu.
Yataḥ pravṛitirbhūtānām yena sarvamidam tatam
Svakarmaṇā tamabhyarcya siddhim vindati mānavaḥ
(*Gītā* 18/45-46)

In Sanātana Hindu *dharma* there had never been any regimentation of religious thought or practice and religion is a matter of life and experience. Man is not merely a lump of flesh and pool of blood, he is also a spirit and spiritual welfare is the most valuable treasure we can aspire to acquire after and in this conscious effort lies the manifestation and fulfilment of man as spirit and as of being of divine in essence. In the present times, specially so after independence, with our declared policy of secularism, everybody is free to practise or desist from observing any kind of religious activities or following any code of religious conduct or way of life. Religion is not to be construed as passport for heaven or the world hereafter, but is a way of life to live peacefully by developing an integrated personality, physical, moral and spiritual and also developing a feeling of unity and oneness with all things and beings of the universe. It teaches us to live a life above our narrow individualism and limitations. Negligence of pursuing a religious life for the realization of the moral, spiritual and higher human values has led to individual, social and national unrest, selfishness and troubles. Our great religious leaders by their own lives and teachings have shown us the path by following which we can rise above our narrow selfish limitations and lead a life of peace, contentment and bliss a life of *abhyudaya* or peace and prosperity here and *niṣśresas* or attain the *summum bonum* or the highest good hereafter. *Yataḥ abhyudahniṣśresasa siddhiḥ sa eva dharmaḥ.* The great religious leaders of India have established their cults and *sampradāyas* teaching and preaching how to live a life of happiness and prosperity in the spiritual level in a corporate way sacrificing and dedicating themselves in the cause even being subjected to great sufferings, persecutions, humiliations and even death. The life and teachings of Guru Deva Dāmodara is also an illustration of such a life of peace and tranquillity of mind with firm determination of character and conviction even in adverse circumstances and situations of life by having a firm belief in God as "*gatirbharta prabhūḥsākṣi nivasaḥ śaraṇam suhṛt*"—the ultimate solace, lord, master, indweller in heart the only protector and friend and benefactor—as said in the *Gītā.* The monotheistic religion of the Vāiṣṇava cult is based on the Vedas and the Upaniṣads, systematised in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and the *Gītā* and also in the *Mahābhārata* and other Purāṇas. The religion preached and propagated by Deva Dāmodara is not a new religion but the age-old Vaiṣnava religion of the *Bhāgavata*, *Gītā* and the Purāṇas and Upaniṣads with the religious rites and rituals as enjoined in the *smṛtis* and *saṁhitās* of Sanātana Vedic *dharma.* Śrī Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva is the God of the Vaiṣṇavas with all His *aiśavaryas* and *mādhuryas:*

Īśvaro paramo kṛṣṇaḥ sacchidānanda vigrahaḥ
Anādirādi govinda sarvakāraṇakāraṇakam.

To such Lord Kṛṣṇa we pray:

Namo brahmanyadevāya gobrāhmaṇa hitāyaca
Jagaddhitāya kṛṣṇāya govindāya namonamaḥ.

24

Bhakti Movement and Aniruddhadeva of Assam

S. DUTTA

Yusuf Husain has rightly pointed out: "Thanks to the teaching, so full and so varied, Brahmanism satisfied the mass of people as well as those who were given to individual, independent reflection. Those who had neither the time nor the opportunity to cultivate their thought by means of the spiritual practices of meditation and comtemplation, received dogmas and symbols to worship. The works known under the collective means of tantras describe the rites and the formulas, destined for those who were incapable of appreciating the pantheistic metaphysics of Brahmanism. They believed in symbols of worshipped images, just as they do today. It was by maintaining the pliancy of faith for the people of different levels that Brahmanism was able to be at once an intellectual and educative force and an instrument for the propagation of ritualistic dogmas of Polytheism."[1]

But this excessive liberty, in course of time, led to religious chaos, elaborate rituals, bloody sacrifices, esoteric rites and class distinction in Brahmanic-Hinduism. Instead of dipping deep into the mysteries of tantrism, people very naturally adopted the outward simple and alluring philosophy of sex and palate as the real criterion of their religion. "The land" to quote B. Kakati, "was infested with inherent teachers of the Vāmācāra Tantric schools with their insistence on the philosophy of sex and palate. Among religious rites, the most spectacular were bloody sacrifices to gods and goddesses amidst deafening noises of drums, cymbals, night-vigils, virgin worship and the lewd dances of temple woman."[2] This was more or less practicably an all-India phenomenon. To save Hinduism from this chaotic condition, it was but necessary to simplify the religious system, rituals and ideologies.

Accordingly, during medieval times (thirteenth to seventeenth centuries) Hinduism underwent a transformation so great that it has very often been compared to that wrought in western Christianity by the Reformation. This in fact is known as the '*bhakti* movement' in the history of India. The focus of religious attention moved, as a result of this movement, from the great gods and the liturgies connected with polytheism to the one God and his incarnations, especially Kṛṣṇa and Rāma. A new attitude to God, emotional passionate *bhakti* replaced the old practices of sacrificial rites and monistic mediation. Forms of religious expression changed: love-songs to God were sung and group-singing known as *kīrtana* was created. In the first centuries of its growth, Indian vernacular literatures were moulded by this religious movement paving the path for the growth of mass literatures. The socio-ritualistic order dominated by the Brāhmaṇas though not completely overthrown, the Brāhmaṇas lost much of their spiritual authority, which eventually passed to the authors of the Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* movement i.e., the saints and the gurus, whose songs and biographies became scriptures for their followers. Further, the new devotional religion, without destroying the Hindu social framework, fostered ideas of brotherhood and equality before the loving Lord. The saints of this movement who were drawn from all levels of society throughout the country further proclaimed that in *bhakti* caste had no substance.[3]

Scholars of course widely differ regarding the origin of the ideas of *bhakti* in India. "According to the school represented by Weber, *bhakti*, as the means and conditions of spiritual salvation was a foreign idea, which came to India with Christianity and exercised a considerable influence on the Hinduism of the period of the great epics and of the Purāṇas. But the resemblance found between many symbols and practices of Christianity and Hinduism are too fortuitious and insufficient to allow of drawing general conclusion.[4] But Barth firmly maintains that "the movement of *bhakti* was an indigenous phenomenon which had its roots in the religious thought of the Hindus," which is supported by Senart too.[5] Husain on the other hand asserts that, "like the Reformation in Europe, the Reformation of Hinduism in the Middle Ages owed a great debt to Islam."[6] A.L. Srivastava refutes it in his statement, "that the movement was not altogether new, and that it did not owe its origin to Islam, as has been erroneously supposed by some modern scholars."[7] Jorden's view that "earlier theories that medieval devotionalism originated either in the north or the south under the impact of Islam are negated by the simple fact that the earliest genuine devotional *bhakti* poetry of Tamilnadu precedes the coming of Islam. Islamic and particularly Sufi influences, may, however, have been felt later,"[8] seems to be more correct. He further says, "How did this new *bhakti* spread from south into Maharashtra, Bengal, and the northern plain? Obviously Tamil could not be the vehicle, so it happened through the Sanskritization of the new spirit. The Vaiṣṇavite Brāhmaṇa scholars infused this new spirit into the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (ninth century) which travelled the high roads of Sanskrit tradition and soon became the principal text of Vaiṣṇavism all over India, making turning point in the history of the Vaiṣṇavite faith."[9]

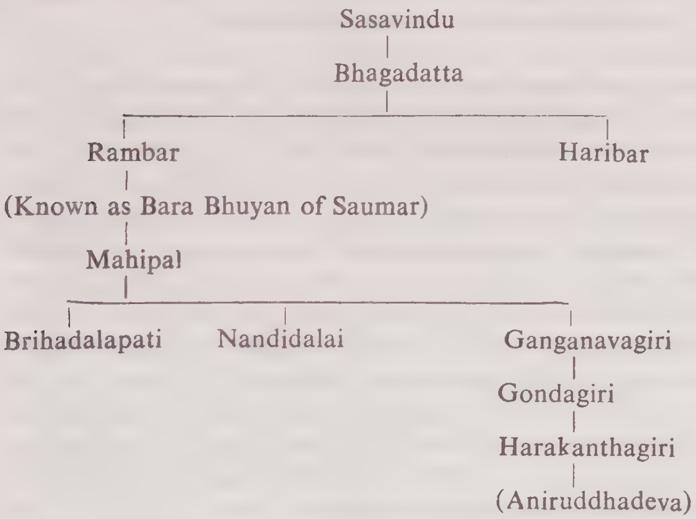
Assam, lying in the North-East Frontier of India was also flooded by a wave of this great *bhakti* movement. For, the religious condition of the then Assam was more or less chaotic of same dimension as in other parts of India. But towards the last decade of the fifteenth century, the religious history of tantric Assam moved towards a new direction. The neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement initiated by the saint poet Śaṅkaradeva in the last decade of the fifteenth century thus proved to be an epoch-making phenomenon in the religious, and social history of medieval Assam. Thus the movement in Assam was not an isolated phenomenon having no connection whatsoever with the current of Vaiṣṇava revival that swept over the rest of India during the period. The movement moreover, did not differ in essential points from its counterparts elsewhere in medieval India. "Characteristics" in the words of S.N. Sarma, "like belief in and adoration of a personal God Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa, emphasis on devotion and faith, recognition of the equality of all persons, the ignoring of the caste distinction at the spiritual level, the high place assigned to virtues like love, piety and non-violence and deprecation of the practice of image-worship, are common to all Vaiṣṇavite movements of the middle ages."[10] In spite of this, the Vaiṣṇavism of Assam was having certain speciality of its own. It evolved a cult of its own best suited to the genius of the people of the locality.[11] The great Vaiṣṇava Renaissance in other parts of India supplied the necessary ideals and inspiration to the initiator of the movement i.e. Śaṅkaradeva, who spent twelve years outside Assam, visiting holy places and studying religious trends in different parts of the country. Thus within two hundred years of its inception, this movement has made neo-Vaiṣṇavism the main religion of the vast Brahmaputra Valley. In fact, it became the faith of the people. It not only changed their spiritual and moral outlook but also prepared the ground for the establishment of a new society based upon the principle of "universal social brotherhood." These ideas practised socially through the democratic organisation of the *satras* (a Vaiṣṇavite monastery) were in direct confrontation with the principle of despotism and rigid social distinction prevailing in the then Assam, which eventually had an impact on the then political system of the region too.

After the death of Śānkaradeva in AD 1568, Mādhavadeva shouldered the responsibility of the growth and development of Bhakti movement in Assam. No idea remains stagnant. Like a flowing river, it also gathers more strength on its way in course of time. The neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement of Śaṅkaradeva and his worthy disciple Mādhavadeva also gathered more adherents by adjusting itself to the colourful culture, religious temperament, mental set-up and environment of the heterogeneous people of ancient Assam: and got itself divided into four *saṃhatis* (infra) or sects, viz.; the Brahma Saṃhati, the Puruṣa Saṃhati,, the Nika Saṃhati and the Kāla Saṃhati.[12] "The process of their growth", rightly pointed out by Dr. Sarma, "may be compared to the course of a river, which divided itself into several channels, without entirely losing its original identity. The different channels, no doubt, derived the main strength from the original river, but nevertheless, they received a considerable supply of water on their way downwards from other sources also."[13]

The *samhati* mentioned last i.e. the Kāla Saṃhati owed its origin to Gopāladeva popularly called Gopal Ata of Bhawanipur. According to the *Carit Puthis* (biographies) of Gopala Ata, he was the real successor of Mādhavadeva. It is said that Mādhavadeva nominated Gopal Ata as his successor in presence of his favourite disciple Sri Ram Ata.[14] Although orthodox Vaiṣṇavas give different mythological interpretations to the origin of the term Kāla Saṃhati, the explanation that it derived its nomenclature from a place called Kaljhar, where Gopāladeva had his headquarters, appears to be more convincing.[15] It is said that it was Gopāladeva, who enunciated the doctrine of *guruvāda* in neo-Vaiṣṇavism. The *guru* in his *samhati* occupies the same exalted position as that of one in Sikhism.[16]

Twelve *satras* were established under the auspices of Gopāladeva: six of them were presided over by Śūdra *mahāntas* and six by Brāhmaṇa *mahāntas*.[17] The former six included those of Mayamara, Banhbari or Dihing, Haladhiati, Gajala, Nagaria and Dalai-po; and the latter six included those of Ahatguri, Kathpar, Khauramochar, Ikarajan, Habung and Charalbanhi. Of the Śūdra *satras*, Mayamara played a very significant role in the history of Assam.

The historic Mayamara *satra* of the Kāla Saṃhati was founded by Aniruddhadeva. He was the son of a Bhuyan named Gondagiri, who traced his descent from Sasavindu of Yadu Vaṃśa. His mother Ajali Devi was the daughter of Śaṅkaradeva's paternal uncle. He was born on Thursday, 15th Vaisākha in 1475 Śaka (11 April 1553). The geneology of Aniruddhadeva as given in the *Mayamara Satrar Vaṃśāvali*[18] is reproduced below:


Sasavindu
Bhagadatta
Rambar
Haribar
(Known as Bara Bhuyan of Saumar)
Mahipal
Brihadalapati
Nandidalai
Ganganavagiri
Gondagiri
Harakanthagiri
(Aniruddhadeva)

Gondagiri was a resident of Vishnu-Balikunchi of Narayanpur in the present Lakhimpur district. Aniruddhadeva's earlier name was Harakanthagiri. When he grew up, he developed interest in the teachings of neo-Vaiṣṇavism and desired to receive instructions from Gopāladeva of Kaljhar, for which he sailed down the Brahmaputra to that place. Before his departure, to preceptor's place, Aniruddhadeva acquired sound knowledge of Sanskrit. There he received religious instructions from Gopāladeva for about three and a half years, after which he came back to his own place and founded a *satra* at Vishnu-Balikunchi. At the time of his initiation, Harakanthagiri was advised by Gopāladeva to follow strictly the path of *bhakti* (devotion) and disseminate this idea among the neophytes in his turn. It is said that it was because Harakanthagiri was to close all other paths of salvation save the one of *bhakti*, he was named Aniruddhadeva.[19]

> *Harakantha giri ati parama nipuna,*
> *Gopalar nawe kare bhakati sampurṇa* 82
> *Gopaleu bulilanta dekhi bichakhyana*
> *Ahana pawate loka laivanta saraṇa*
> *Anyatra śāstrana patha kariya nirodha*
> *Bhakatira pathe matra karibaka bodha* 83
> *Etekehe ananāma haiba Aniruddhā*
> *Samasta sāstrara pracharibe guḍha tattva*"

Aniruddhadeva started propagating the Vaiṣṇava religion from the month of Māgha (January/February) of Śaka 1523 (1601). His first disciple was a Muslim tailor called Dheli Darji, who after initiation was named Dhyanapati.[20] After staying at Vishnu Balikunchi for a short period Aniruddhadeva because of frequent Dafala (a hill tribe of Arunachal Pradesh now called Nishis) raids, shifted its location to Nahar-Ati, on the bank of Marnai river in the present Narayanpur Mauza of the north-Lakhimpur sub-division. With his headquarters at Nahar-Ati, Aniruddhadeva initiated a large number of disciples into neo-Vaiṣṇavism. In fact Nahar Ati Satra was the main centre of his activities. He, however, stayed for a short period in Majuli (the largest river island of the world in the Brahmaputra river) on the bank of a lake called Moamari and converted many people of the neighbouring area into the new creed. He used to send his apostles or visit himself the tribal area and spread the messages of love, equality and brotherhood among the inhabitants. The democratic outlook of the *satra* and the spirit of humanism appealed the tribesman and they immediately accepted him as their religious preceptor.

Amongst the tribes, the Morans were the first to be converted. They were followed by the Kacharis, Chutiyas, Barahis, Ahoms and the Brittials (professional castes). Within a short time, Aniruddhadeva occupied among them a position higher than a temporal overlord, so that they would bow their heads only to him and no one else. So rigidly they followed this principle that to avoid bowing their heads at the door, they had the entrances to their houses cut at the gable ends and not at transcripts.[21]

Aniruddhadeva had scholarly talents as well. He translated the fourth and the fifth cantos of the *Bhāgavata* to Assamese. He also composed a work called *Bhakti Maṅgala Ghoṣā* in line with Mādhavadeva's *Nāmaghoṣā*, which contained 805 cantos. In fact this scripture is normally used in the devotional congregation of the Mayamara society, which can be compared with the *Granth Sahib* of the Sikhs. Besides, he composed 182 *bargeets* (devotional prayer songs). By extracting the substance of the *Bhāgavata*, he wrote a religious book called *Nija-Śāstra* in prose and verse, which can be studied only by the senior and mature devotees (*pakā bhakta*). All these compositions, still prevalent, reveal the scholarly talent of this great Vaiṣṇava reformer. This talent of the reformer ultimately attracted some of the upper sections of the Assamese society as well. His followers known as Moamariyas (after the name of his *satra* at Majuli), later on corrupted into Mayamariyas (also known as the Mataka) gradually increased, which spread all over Assam.

The news that a large number of the subjects of the Ahom monarch had been accepting Aniruddhadeva as their spiritual preceptor, who was to them superior even to the monarch, reached the then Ahom king Sukhampha Khora Raja (1552-1603). The Ahom monarchs had been considering otherwise also the Vaiṣṇavite movement a danger to their growing power, as the teachings of the Vaiṣṇava reformers stood diametrically opposed to the principles on which the absolute Ahom monarchy rested. Earlier, with a view to nipping the movement in the bud, Suhungmung or the Dihingiya Raja (1497-1538) adopted a hostile attitude towards the Vaiṣṇava reformers. He ordered Mādhavadeva, Śaṅkaradeva's popular disciple, and Hari, Śaṅkaradeva's son-in-law to be beheaded on the plea that they failed to catch elephants for the king. Mādhavadeva's life, however, the king spared knowing that he was an innocent bachelor devotee. At this, Śaṅkaradeva, a subject of the Ahom kingdom, left the homeland and went to Cooch Behar. Now Sukampha wanted to carry on an investigation to the missionary activities of Aniruddhadeva who was alleged to propagate seditious teachings among his disciples, who were at the same time subjects of the Ahom monarch. Aniruddhadeva was summoned to the court but he could convince the king of his purely missionary work among the backward classes without any tinge of political dogma. The king, being satisfied, permitted him to carry on his work. The Mayamara Satra thus survived the first test of its existence.

Aniruddhadeva passed away on 11 Pauṣa (first week of December) Śaka 1548 (1626.) At his demise, his son Kṛṣṇānandadeva became the Satradhikar (religious head of a *satra*), who shifted the *satra* to Khutiaputa in Jorhat in February, 1630.

In order to have an idea of his scholarly talent and extreme devotion to *bhakti*, we have given below one of Aniruddhadeva's prayer songs composed just before his death: (*ACMSV*, pp. 31f).

Geeta Rāga Jhumuree

E Mana Kamane Parasa Nindo
Maya Sarjya Maje Majiya Achhasa
Jāgiya Chinta Govinda
Yena Sapunata Sarira Dhariyā
Bhrame Jiva Thai Thai
Shei Sarirata Sukhadukha Paya
Vishaya Bhunje Sadai. 1
Sehi Mate Jeeu Sarjyara Sarira
Taka Pakhariya Yai
Svapna Tanu Sama Naradeha Paya
Sukha Mane Take Lai. 2
Gurucaranara Anugraha Labhi
Jekhane Cetana Pave
Svapanaprāya Itu Sarira Pakhare
Svarupa Sumari Yawe 3
Jīvara Vishaya Sravana Kirtana
Bhaktekhe Suhrida Yana
Bhaktara Sangata Sarvakhyane Rase
Sravana Kari Kirtana. 4
Bharyā Putra Sava Dehara Sangiya
Tatekhe Kariya Rati
Mayasaryya Maje Nidrāta Pariya
Nedhekhi Hari Bhakati. 5
Krishna Charaṇar Anugraha Bhaila
Jitu Purukhaka Prati
Tewekhe Isvara Krishnata Karibe
Sasneha Prema Bhakati. 6
Bhakatibihin Jivantate Mara
Bhatira Yena Nisvasa

Paśura Sulabha Indriyara Sukha
Tatekhe Karasha Asā. 7
Yena Pratibimba Sarira Dekhiya
Pakhare Nija Sarira
Pratibimba Sama Naradeha Pai
Mane Karileka Thira. 8
Nija Dehu Sama Jīvaka Agate
Nedhekhe Mana Luchana
Hari Bhakti Cine Jīvara Kusala
Nai Jana Sarhakhyana. 9
Kahe Aniruddha Maha Muka Praya
Bhakati Vihina Mana
Ibāra Karunā Karlu Gopāla
Caraṇe Lailu Saraṇa. 10

"Oh mind, awake from the bed of alluration and remember Govinda. As in a dream, one moves from place to place and feels like enjoying or suffering for a momentary period; one in real life also, forgetting the momentariness of this human life, wants only worldly enjoyment. But when he comes to senses with the grace of his *guru*, forgets about this worldly life and realises the real end of life. One then should absorb himself in devotion by being in the midst of devotees. One who evolves himself in worldly life and always remains busy with members of his family, forgets about devotion to God, like the one in deep slumber on the bed of alluration. One who is lucky to have the blessings of God, keeps himself busy in devotion or *bhaktī* to God. But the one devoid of *bhakti* is like a dead in alive, having worldly animal life. As one forgets his self by looking at the reflection in a mirror, people very often forget about the real end of life. But nobody can have a real happy life without devotion to God. So Aniruddhadeva completely surrenders himself at the feet of Gopāla."

Thus members of different castes and tribes becoming disciples of the Mayamara Satra founded by Aniruddhadeva, formed a greater religious community i.e. the Matak community. As pointed out by S.K. Bhuyan.[22]

The Moamarias were all disciples of one *satra*, or its branches;

> but they belonged to separate tribes and communities, Morans, Chutiyas, Kacharis, Bihias, Ahoms, Kaivartas, and Brittials; and many caste Hindus, Brāhmaṇas, Kayasthas and Kalitas were found among the Momarias. The disciples were confined to no particular territory but scattered over the whole country as far as Goalpara.

Their common bond of unity was their sect, i.e., the Mayamara sect; which developed through the Mayamara Satra with the *guru* at its head. Thus Mayamara Satra (also the Dihing Satra) of the Kāla Saṃhati did great service to the society by accepting the members of the depressed and backward classes to their fold and placing them on an equal footing with members of the so-called higher castes. S.K. Bhuyan rightly points out:[23]

> In other parts of India, the humiliation to which these unfortunates were subjected, drove them to the bosom of other religions; in Assam the liberal policy of the Kāla Saṃhati Satras (Mayamara and Dihing being the most leading ones) endowed them with a sense of self-respect and individual value.

But long accustomed to their traditional rites, manners and customs, the different tribes in the beginning were found not easily amenable to the discipline of neo-Vaiṣṇavism.[24] Any imposition or drastic change in their traditional pattern of life, would have naturally caused hostile reaction. Aniruddhadeva and his successors, therefore had to shape their religious dogmas and practices in such a way as to suit the temperament of the tribal communities. Relaxation and compromises thus became the corner-stone of their policy in the dealings with the people. Accordingly while efforts were made to carry on the messages and teachings of the new creed into the midst of these new converts, some of their old beliefs and rites were allowed to continue in a mild and modified form. The consequent rise in number of disciples by leaps and bounds excited jealousy of some other *satras* of Assam. And for this, Aniruddhadeva was branded from some corners as a dissenter, a promoter of heterodoxy for offering initiation to unrefined tribes. The prevalence of certain tantric rites amongst some of his followers for sometime as a result of Aniruddhadeva's give-and-take policy, was attributed to Aniruddhadeva and to his successors' connivance.

These in fact do not stand the test of reality and credibility.

Some salient differences of the Mayamara Vaiṣṇava sect with those of its counterparts in Assam.

Even though the Mataks or the Mayamariyas are also Vaiṣṇavas and Aniruddhadeva, the founder of the sect, had acknowledged his debt and origin to Śaṅkaradeva, Mādhavadeva and Gopāladeva,[25] the pioneer apostles of Vaiṣṇavism in Assam, this sect in course of time, developed certain distinct characteristics of its own.

The Mayamara Mahanta usually avoided introducing Hindu rites or rituals among the tribal communities or imposing Brāhmaṇa priesthood on them, though the same was allowed for the higher caste followers of his sect. The tribal disciples of the Mayamara *satra* had, therefore no relation with Brāhmaṇa priesthood. In course of time, when they became more Hinduised, they gave up most of their tribal rites and food habits, but did not accept Brāhmaṇa priesthood.

Further, the tribal communities considered all their members as equal. As a result, we find great flexibility of caste rules among the disciples of the Mayamara *satras*. Here a Brāhmaṇa, simply because of his birth, could not claim, unlike in other *satras*, a higher position or status to a non-Brāhmaṇa in the social functions like the *sabhā* (religious congregation), where a *bhakt* (devotee) irrespective of his caste, took the leading part in its management, by virtue of his being the *Barbura* (village headman). A Brāhmaṇa, if he lacked these qualities, could not take the leading part simply because of his birth.

Equality of human being was not only taught but also practised in a Mayamara *satra*. The *guru*, despite the extreme reverence shown to him as the living embodiment of God, did not consider himself superior to the community of disciples. In the social field, he was only a senior disciple. When the disciples bow their heads to him, he also reciprocated by bowing his head to them in a like manner, which was even never imagined in other Vaiṣṇava *satras*.

Even in practising certain social rites in *namghar* (public prayer hall), or the *satra*, the spirit of equality was greatly emphasised, where all disciples irrespective of age or sex were given equal importance. It is still seen in the Mayamara *satra* that while distributing *prasāda*, no one is allowed to take his share, unless each of them gets his. They all would start together and leave together. Even little children are not given any relaxation in this respect.

The majority of the disciples, illiterate as they were, could not read the religious texts written by Aniruddhadeva or his successors. Moreover, being accustomed to worship some concrete objects so long, they could not grasp immediately the philosophy of neo-Vaiṣṇavism, which lacked idol-worship. To solve this problem the *guru* himself was considered as the *mūrti* or the image of God; and Aniruddhadeva, the founder of the *satra*, was thus conceived as the Ādyamurti (the primal image). It should be noted here that unlike many other Vaiṣṇava *satras* of Assam and some other parts of the country, the Mayamara *satras* never had any *vigraha* worship (image worship), which has been continued till today. This honour was always given to their *guru* and the religious scriptures composed by Aniruddhadeva and his successors.

In other Vaiṣṇava *satras* in the installation ceremony of an *adhikar* or *gosain*, his co-*adhikar* from a fixed *satra* used to send *nirmali* or garland, only after receiving which, the *dekadhikar* (would-be *adhikar*) was formally declared as *adhikar*. But in the Mayamara *satra*, there was no such practice. Here, it is not a co-*adhikar*, but the community of disciples, which installed a *dekadhikar* on headship of a *satra*.

The *adhikar* on the *mahanta* of a Mayamara *satra* did not collect any religious tax, and therefore officers like Sajtola (Satola), Medhi of Barmedhi, found in other *satras* for such purposes, are absent here. The Mayamara *satras* constantly refused to accept the offer of rent-free grants from the Ahom kings unlike most other Vaiṣṇava *satras* cf Assam, and thus developed an independent growth out of the tithes voluntarily offered by the disciples.

In, construction of the Mayamara *nāmghar* and the *satras*, as well, certain specialities were observed. A Mayamara *nāmghar* did not have any *maṇikūṭa* (sacred place for keeping religious scriptures or idols). Instead, it had a separate house called *dharmaghar*, which is also called *nāmghar* in some places, which housed the scriptures. The hall for community prayer was called *rabhaghar* in some places, which did not have any enclosure, as it had to accommodate a large number of people. As such, such halls were considered unfit for keeping religious scriptures, and a separate chamber for that purpose had to be built. Moreover, the Mayamara *satra* had certain scriptures, which were accessible to only a permitted section of the disciples, for which also, some amount of privacy and security was essential. Again, in absence of an image, the religious scriptures themselves served as one of the two concrete forms of God, the other being the *guru* himself. Considering that their regular public visuality could diminish their importance, the *śāstras* were kept separately and were brought to the public prayer hall only occasionally, showing highest veneration to them.

In the Mayamara *satra*, the Ojapali and other dances, performed by individual disciples in most other *satras*, were not given any importance. It was the *gayan-bayan*, a community orchestral performance, which used to predominate in the Mayamara society. Gayan-Bayan in a Mayamara *satra* totally differed from that of the other Vaiṣṇava *satras*, where the religious recital from the *kīrtana* of Śaṅkaradeva and *namghoṣā* of Madhavadeva was performed with clappings and playing of *khol* and *tal* (cymbal). In the Mayamara *satra*, the place of *kirtana* was taken by the *Adyeswar Śāstra* i.e., the text composed by the primal image or the founder of the *satra* i.e., Aniruddhadeva.

Another important point of difference between the Mayamara *satra* and the other Vaiṣṇava *satras* was the non-performance of any *bhaona* (religious play). *Marich-Badh*, a play written by Nityānandadeva, the fourth *satradhikar* of the Mayamara *satra*, is perhaps the only exception in this respect. The reason for non-performance of *bhaona* might be that, in a *bhaona*, be it for a short while, certain evil forces like *asuras* (demons), and other gods and goddesses get importance. Such performance might create confusion in the minds of the simple devotees, as it might go against monotheistic principle taught by the new creed. Because of the same reason, *rāslīlā* performed in some prominent Vaiṣṇava *satras* of Assam is not observed in the Mayamara *satras*, for here in *rāslīlā* alongwith Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā also gets importance. Monotheism being its main tenet, only Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu is given supreme and sole importance.

As the performance of *bhaona* became obsolete in the Mayamara *satra*, it naturally obviated the use of *khol* as well, which appropriately fits with *bhaona*. In the *gayan-bayan* of a Mayamara *satra*, only *mṛdaṅga*, which is a traditional musical instrument of the region, is used.[26]

Thus the disciples of Aniruddhadeva formed in course of time a distinct community by themselves, developing certain cultural traits and patterns of social behaviour under the Vaiṣṇava reformers of their own within the orbit of Vaiṣṇavism. The members of different castes and tribes, becoming disciples of this *satra*, formed a greater religious community i.e., the Matak community. The wide popularity of this *satra* with a corresponding development in its material prosperity attracted large number of disciples to its fold, which led in course of time to the establishment of several Vaiṣṇava *satras* of the Mayamara sect, out of which five prominent *satras* are still very famous in Assam. These are: Dinjoy, Garpara, Madarkhat, Tiphuk in Dibrugarh district, and Puranimati in Jorhat district. This wide popularity, on the other hand, excited jealousy of other Vaiṣṇava *satras* and the enmity of the then Ahom government. This led to persecution of several Mayamara *gurus* and disciples by the Ahom Government, as the *satra* did not compromise its principles with those of the absolute Ahom Government. This historic struggle of the Mataks with the then Ahom regime known popularly as the Moamaria Rebellion in the history of Assam may be compared with the historic struggle of the Sikhs with the mighty Mughals because of the persecution of the Sikh *gurus* and their devotees. This historic struggle drastically changed the course of the history of Assam, nay of the entire north-eastern region, which is beyond the purview of this article.

The followers of Aniruddhadeva and his successors at present, according to an unofficial census, is estimated to be more than twelve lakhs. Most of them live in the present Dibrugarh district of Assam, the erstwhile Matak kingdom, and the rest live scattered throughout the Brahmaputra valley.

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[2] B. Kakati, *Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā*, p. 34.

[3] J.T.F. Jordens, "Medieval Hindu Devotionalism", *A Cultural History of India* ed., A.L. Basham, p. 266.

[4] Husain, op. cit., p. 3.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., p. 26.

[7] A.L. Srivastava, "The Bhakti Movement", *Medieval Indian Culture*, p. 43.

[8] Jordens, op. cit., p. 266.

[9] Ibid., p. 267.

[10] S.N. Sarma, *The Neo-Vaiṣṇavite Movement and the Satra Institution of Assam* p. ix.

[11] Ibid.

[12] The Brahma Saṃhati was so called for its dominance by the Brahmanic elements: the Puruṣa Saṃhati was named after its founder Purusottama Thakur. The Nika (meaning pure) Saṃhati (meaning sect) was so called, because it strictly conformed to the rules and regulations prescribed by Mādhavadeva and claimed to be a purified sect. For details see S.N. Sarma, p. 68.

[13] S.N. Sarma, op. cit., p. 68.

[14] T.N. Goswami, ed., *Gopal Ata Charita*, pp. 20, 56.

[15] S.N. Sarma, op. cit., p. 70.

[16] Ibid., p. 85.

[17] Ibid., p. 84; M. Neog., *Sankardeva and His Times*, p. 138; S.K. Bhuyan, *Anglo Assamese Relations*, pp. 189, 194.

[18] Chidananda Goswami, *Sri Sri Aniruddhadevar Charitra aru Mayamara Satrar Gosai Sakalar Vamsawali*, pp. 47 ff, (henceforth abbreviated as *ACMSV*).

[19] *ACMSV*, p. 16; Nakul Chandra Chetia, "Mayamara Vaisnava Dharmar Itibritta" (in Assamese), p. 24; P. Gogoi, "Ahoms in the Mayamara Sect", *Tai Ahom Religion and Customs*, pp. 105 f.

[20] *ACMSV*, p. 21.

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[23] Ibid., p. 197.

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25

The Bhakti Movement of Assam in Historical Perspective

N.N. ACHARYYA

The rise of the neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement in Assam under the patronage of Mahāpuruṣa Śaṅkaradeva (1449-1568) is a conspicuous event since Kāmarūpa was a strong seat of tantrism at that time as available evidences suggest. The *bhakti* movement of Assam in a sense was directed against the variety of image-worship and sacrifices associated with Śakti worship. In course of time, the doctrine of Śaṅkaradeva and his followers replaced the tantric faith among the people of Assam, and this movement has left its inevitable influence on the religious life of this region till the present day.

Prior to the movement initiated by Śaṅkaradeva, Śāktism had been the leading form of Hinduism in north-east India since centuries. The adherents of Śakti worship base their observances on various tantric works and the fundamental idea is to emphasise on the procreative power of Nature. They practised polytheism (worship of many gods) and sacrificed living beings to appease their gods and goddesses. The profusion of tantrism is proved by various temples e.g. the Kāmākhyā temple at Gauhati, the Kechaikhāiti at Sadiya and a network of Śākta temples in north Lakhimpur which are still in existence.

Śaṅkaradeva's life was marked by an incessant struggle against tantrism. He courageously fought against idol-worship, ruthless sacrifices and esoteric rites practised by the Śāktas. He stressed upon worshipping only Viṣṇu in his varied manifestations and as such his creed was one of qualified monism. According to this view, the phenomenal world is only the manifestation of Viṣṇu in several forms and shapes and has no reality apart from him. Everything in this world, including the offerings to the God, are only aspects or attributes of Viṣṇu himself and exist only as such. (At this point, this doctrine has a remarkable semblance to W. Hegel's 'Idea' and its self-evolution where everything is only a manifestation of the

Idea exhibiting its infinite variety of forms and every act is a step towards the self-realisation of this idea.

Śaṅkara's doctrine says that devotion should be pursued without desire. This devotion is of two types, one is *niṣkāma* which is practised as an end in itself and another is *sakāma* which is practised for worldly ends. The former is considered as a higher form since it is free of any intention. But usually devotion is practised to gain a specific end and in this kind of *sakāma* performances the host invites devotees to chant hymns and blessings.

The realisation of the identity of the phenomenal world and Viṣṇu is effected through incantation of hymns. It is believed that by these hymns the offerings are transformed into the pure realities, i.e., *guru*, *deva*, *nāma* and *bhakta*, which together constitute devotion. It is said that the devotee forms an internal relation with god through the offerings which are at once physical and mental.

During the early years, Vaiṣṇavism had to face a number of problems from various sides. The tantric masters accused them of preaching heresy and some Ahom kings were decidedly against the monotheist belief of Śaṅkara. The Koch king Naranārāyaṇa (1540-84) was a great patron of Vaiṣṇavism and encouraged the reforms initiated by Śaṅkaradeva. Śaṇkara tried to propagate his views in the Ahom territory at first, but due to strong oppositions he was forced to shift to Barpeta within Koch kingdom.

The organisation of the devotional movement has two principal components, viz., the village prayer house *nāmghar* and the *satra* system. A *satra* consists of a *satrādhikār* or *gosāin* and his disciples. Some 650 *satras* in total are estimated to be existing in Assam valley till date. The *satrādhikār* of the *satra* traces his genealogy through his predecessors to the founder of the *satra* and thence finally to the founder of his sub-sect, who was one of the disciples initiated by Śaṅkara. These *satras* may be viewed as traditional repositories of Śaṅkara's bhaktism.

The *satras* or monasteries were established by Śaṅkara and a number of his followers including Dāmodaradeva, Mādhavadeva, Harideva and Gopāla Ata of Bhawanipur and the sects founded by these disciples of Śaṅkara, although subsequently differed from each other in minor points or principles, were all engaged in propagating Vaiṣṇavism.

Mādhavadeva was confined to the region of lower Assam with Barpeta as the headquarters until the death of Śaṅkaradeva, but thereafter, he sought to penetrate eastwards into Ahom territories. Hitherto Ahom kings were hostile towards the *bhakti* movement, but owing to the venture of Gopāla Ata and some other disciples of Dāmodaradeva, the Ahom kings gradually changed their attitude and welcomed the new doctrine. Mādhavadeva was greatly appraised for his liberal attitude towards his disciples. The Vaiṣṇava sects of Assam in fact regard Śaṅkara, Mādhava and Dāmodara as three different emanations of god Viṣṇu. Mādhava was devoted to the principle of *bhakti* and he was able to spread Śaṅkara's doctrine throughout the Brahmaputra valley.

Soon after the death of Śaṅkara, the Brāhmaṇa Gosāins like Dāmodaradeva and Harideva grew very powerful and influential. Dāmodara broke away from Mādhava and the former had put a greater emphasis on the message of *Bhāgavata* although he did not voice against Śaṅkara's teachings. Koch king Lakṣminārāyaṇa, son of Naranārāyaṇa, was initiated into Vaiṣṇavism by Dāmodardeva. Gopāla Ata had spread the doctrine of *bhakti* in Upper Assam among the Morans, Kacharis, Chutias in addition to Brāhmaṇas, Kāyasthas and Kalitās. Twelve *satras* were established under the auspices of Gopāla Ata, six of which were presided over by Śūdra *mahāntas* and another six by Brāhmaṇa *mahahtas*. The Śūdra *satras* included Dihing, Haladhi-ati, Mayamara, Gajala, Nagaria and Doloi-po. The Brāhmaṇa *satras* were Ahatguri, Kathpur, Habung, Ikarajan, Khouramochar and Charaibahi. These twelve *satras* and their offshoots later became known as the famous Kāla Saṃhati order. These *satras* of Gopāla Ata claimed a certain degree of superiority over the other three orders, viz., Puruṣa Saṃhati, Brahma Saṃhati and Nika or Niṣṭha Saṃhati *satras*. Consequently, a conflict among these four orders was almost unavoidable.

The Brahma Saṃhati is associated with Dāmodaradeva and Harideva, the two renowened Brāhmaṇa exponents of Assam Vaiṣṇavism. Brahmanical rites and rituals flourished side by side with devotional rites and practices in this Saṃhati. The Nika Saṃhati was founded by Mathurādāsa Ata and Padma Ata alias Badala Ata, two prominent disciples of Mādhavadeva. Having seen certain deviations and laxity amongst the followers of other sub-sects, these two Atas organised this branch in strict conformity with the teachings of Mādhavadeva and hence this purified sub-sect came to be known as the Nika (*niṣṭha*—clean) Saṃhati.

About the same time when Kāla Saṃhati *satras* were founded, another twenty-four *satras* were established by two grandsons of Śaṅkara, of twelve each; these two grandsons were Puroṣottama Ṭhākur and Chaturbhūj Ṭhākur; and the twenty-four *satras* founded by them formed what is known as Puruṣa-Saṃhati *satras*.

The schism between Mādhava and Dāmodara appeared just after Śaṅkara's death. Dāmodara's disciple Bhaṭṭadeva had recorded Dāmodara's religious dictations, and his principles of *bhakti* were chiefly based on the teachings of *Bhāgavata*. The followers of Dāmodara's doctrine in Assam later on came to be known as Dāmodarīya sect.

Haridеva, another disciple of Śaṅkara, founded a sect known as Bamuni sect. He was entrusted with the task of propagating Vaiṣṇavism in the Ahom kingdom, but the Ahom king, not being happy with this, sought to imprison Harideva. Harideva escaped somehow and arrived near Hayagrīva Mādhava in Kāmarūpa district, where he converted a large number of people. Bhagīratha, a Koch viceroy was pleased to meet Harideva and helped him in spreading Vaiṣṇavism in Kāmarūpa. Harideva and his disciples founded many *satras* including one in a village called Bahari near Barpeta. The disciples of Harideva worked very hard to establish the influence of Brāhmaṇas and therefore this sect was called Bāmunī or Bāmuniā sect. There were very little differences between Bāmunī and Dāmodarīya sect, and the two were finally united.

After the death of Mādhavadeva, differences of opinion became stronger between the Brāhmaṇa and Śūdra orders of Kāla Saṃhati *satras*. Aniruddha, the founder of Mayamara *satra* in Upper Assam became in course of time a great rival of the Brāhmaṇas and he later founded the Moamaria sect, the adherents of which played a decisive part in the downfall of Ahom kingdom. The Dihing *satra* and the Mayamara *satra* became the most prominent among the six Śudra *satras*. They admitted various local tribes into their fold like Kacharis, Kaivarta's, Chutias, Morans and Ahoms. The democratic outlook of these *satras* made them extremely popular and they became the strongholds of Śūdra Vaiṣṇavism in Upper Assam as opposed to the Brahmanical order. These Śūdra *satras* had many common features with other Kāla Saṃhati *satras*, although every Kāla Saṃhati *satra* enjoyed a good deal of autonomy in every direction. Besides the conflict between Kāla Saṃhati and other *samhatis*, frictions among Kāla Saṃhati *satras* themselves were visible, due to the individual autonomy enjoyed by each of the *satras*. The popular appeal of the Kāla Saṃhati *satras*, especially those of the Śūdra order, provided a kind of religious refuge for the tribal masses of entire north-east and endowed them with enough self-respect and a separate identity.

The *bhakti* movement of Assam has left its significant marks on every aspect of contemporary society such as literature, language, music, dance, architecture and fine arts. Besides metrical versions of the *Bhāgavata*, Śaṅkaradeva wrote several dramas in Assamese, i.e., *Rukmiṇī Haraṇa*, *Pārijāta Haraṇa*, *Kali Gopāl*, *Patnī Prasād*, *Kalīya Damana*, *Amṛitamathana* and *Rāmavijayanāṭaka*, and *kāvyas* like *Hariścandra upākhyāna* and *Ajamil upākhyāna*; his religious songs (*kīrtana*) and devotional works like *Bhaktipradīpa*, *Bhaktiratnākara* and others are perhaps his masterpieces. Mādhavadeva produced two devotional treatises, viz., *Namghoṣa* and *Bhaktiratnāvalī*. Bhaṭṭadeva wrote *Kathāgītā* and *Kathābhagavata*. Puruṣottama Vidyavāgīsa and Pītāmbara Siddhāntavāgīśa wrote immortal works like *Prayoga Ratnamālā* and *Kāmarūpīya Smṛti*. Ananta Kandalī, Rāma Sarasvatī and other poets translated many gems of Sanskrit literature into Assamese and made them accessible to the local people. Thus the foundation of Assamese language and literature was laid down through emotional and religious enthusiasm caused by the Vaiṣṇava reformation.

Instruction in religion and ethics was imparted through the *satras* and *nāmghars*. These had tremendous educative value and extensive moral influence over the masses. The *satras* established by Śaṅkaradeva were main cultural units for imparting dance and musical education. The *bhaona* performances had great popularity. The rhythmic appeals of the *satriya* dances were great contributions of the age. The *satra* architecture associated with neo-Vaiṣṇavism developed a purely local religio-cultural style blended with contemporary Indian patterns. The marks of resurgent Vaiṣṇavism are also distinct in the fine arts of Assam such as ivory carving and mural paintings having been influenced with folk-art elements. The *Dharmapurāṇa* of Kavi Chandra Dvija, *Mahābhārata* (Udyagaparvan) of Rāma Saraswtī and *Ānanda Laharī* of Ananta Ácharya are few of the illustrated manusctipts which testify to the painting excellence of the age.

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Social Perspective of Caitanyaism

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The life of Śrī Caitanya (1486-1533), as it is depicted in Murāri Gupta's *Srī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya-caritāmṛtam*, Paramānanda Sen's *Śrī-kṛṣṇacaitanya-Caritāmṛtam* and *Caitanyacandrodaya*, Vrindāvana Dāsa's *Caitanyabhāgavata*, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's *Śrīkṛṣṇacaitanya-Caritāmṛta*, Jayānanda's *Caitanyamaṅgala* and Locanadāsa's *Caitanyamaṅgala*, hardly suggests that the illustrious Vaiṣṇava saint of Bengal ever preached a system of religious teachings. The essence of Caitanyaism may, however, be derived from the verses attributed to Śrī Caitanya, known as *Śikṣāṣṭaka*, occurring in Kavirāja's *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* and Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Padāvalī*. In one of the verses it is said:

Na dhanaṃ na janam na sundarīm kavitām va Jagadīśa kāmaya/
Mama janmani janmanīśvare bhavatād bhaktirahaitukī tvayi//

That is: 'Oh lord of the world, I want nothing from you—wealth kith and kin, beautiful woman, or the talent of a poet. Let there by my desireless devotion to God in each of my lives'.

As a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Caitanya assumed the mood of Rādhā:

yugāyitaṃ nimeṣeṇa chakṣūṣā prāvriṣāyitaṁ/
Śūnyāyitam jagat sarvaṃ Govinda virahena me//

That is: 'Due to separation from Govinda, a moment appears to be an age to me, the rain has descended on my eyes, the entire world appears to be vacant'. This expression found in one of the verses attributed to Caitanya himself is corroborated by Murāri Gupta's *Ṣrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya-caritāmṛtam*, where Caitanya is described as "*Ṣtī Rādhikā premabharātimatto*" (surcharged with the love of Śrī Rādhā)[1] and *Śrī Rādhā rasamādhuri-dhuritatanur*

Gaurāṅga mūrtiḥ svayam' (one who had assumed the image of Gaurāṅga with his body sweetened by the bliss of Rādhā).[2] Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa was known as the god of the *bhāgavatas* as far back as the early centuries before the Christian era. But Caitanya seems to have introduced an innovation in the Bhāgavata religion of Bengal by upholding the way of Rādhā to be followed by all who desired to achieve their liberation at the feet of Kṛṣṇa. The seeds of this new form of the *bhakti* cult might have been sowed when Jayadeva composed his *Gīta-Govindam.* However, Vṛndāvana Dāsa had stated:

Bhaktirase ādi Mādhavendra sūtradhār|
Śrī Gaurcandra kahiyāchen vārevār||[3]

That is: 'Mādhavendra was the first pathfinder in the field of devotion, as it has been said by Śri Gaurchandra again and again". Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja[4] has also suggested that the *bhakti* cult originated with Mādhavendra Purī from whom his disciple Īśvara Purī inherited it. Īśvara Purī transmitted it to his disciple Śrī Caitanya.

Whatever might have been the original source of Caitanyaism, the cult of *bhakti* could not bring in an aversion to *karma* or action. Indifference to one's duty was not considered as the religion of *vairāgya* (desirelessness). It was not the religion of an impotent beggar. Caitanya has stated in one of the verses (*Śikṣāṣṭaka*):

Triṇādapi sunīcena taroriva sahiṣṇunā|
Amāninā mānadena kīrtanīyo sadā Hariḥ||

That is: "The name of Hari is to be sung always by those who are more humble than grasses, who have more forbearance than trees, who are themselves without respect, but pay respect to others". It shows the strength of character expected of a true devotee of God or a Vaiṣṇava.

Some Sources of Caitanyaism

Mention is often made of Śrī Caitanya's commentary on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa.*[5] It is said that he made a copy of the manuscript of the *Bhāgavata*[6]. He often gave brilliant exposition of the inner meaning of some of the verses contained in the *Bhāgavata.* This is attested by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja,[7] Kavikarṇapura Paramānanda Sen[8] and Vṛndāvana Dāsa.[9] Tradition goes that it was at the instance of Caitanya that Viṣṇu Purī, a *sannyāsin* of Tirhut, made a selection of verses from the *Bhāgavata*, gave to his anthology the name of *Bhaktiratnāvalī* and presented it to the former[10]. Whatever might be the truth in this tradition current among a section of Bengal Vaiṣṇavas, it remains true that Caitanya was fond of the *Bhāgavata* and derived much of his inspiration for spiritual life from this perennial source of loving devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

The *Bhāgavata* appears to have inherited the doctrine of devotion from an earlier period. It is said that the great sage Nārada first explained *bhakti* to Vedavyāsa who, in his turn, gave its full explanation in *Śrimad-Bhāgavatam.*[11] Without going into the chronological puzzles related to this Puraṇic text, it may be safely assumed that the *Bhakti-Sūtras*, signifying the experiences in the path of devotion in condensed forms, required an elaboration for consumption of the common people.

The authorship and date of the one hundred aphorisms ascribed to *Śāṇḍilya* are uncertain. But the *Śāṇḍilya-Sūtras* represent a compilation as well as an exposition of illustrative authoritative texts on the main aspects of the doctrine of devotion. "From a desire to know the established truths on the subject of Devotion, as in the case of Duty (in the *Pūrva Mīmāmsā*)—inasmuch as it is the cause of the attainment of man's highest end, proceeds the following aphorism[12]—thus the *Śāṇḍilya-Sūtras* are introduced by the commentator Svapneśvarâcārya who was the grandson of Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma, a close associate (*parikara*) of Caitanya[13]. Keeping in view the relationship of the commentator with the associate of Caitanya, it may be held that the work commented on used to be much discussed about among the Caitanyaites at Nīlācala.

It may not be unreasonable for us to assume that the *Bhāgavata* and its precursor the *Bhakti-Sūtra* of Nārada, along with the *Śāṇḍilya-Sūtra* formed the theoretical foundation of the cult which was put into practice in Śrī Caitanya's life. As it has been observed in the *Nārada-Sūtras* (no. 76), "treatises on devotion should be studied with attention and observances therein laid down as binding should be performed" (*bhaktiśāstrāṇi mananiyāni tadbodhakarmāṇi karaṇiyāni*).

Nārada-Sūtras

Nārada has referred to the previous teachers of devotion (*bhaktyācāryāḥ*) namely, Sanatkumāra, Vyāsa, Śuka, Śāṇḍilya, Garga, Viṣṇu, Kauṇḍilya, Śeṣa, Uddhava, Āruṇi, Bali, Hanumat, Vibhīṣana and others.[14] It appears that Nārada has codified the teachings of his *pūrva-śūris* in the form of *sūtras*, his object being to expound the doctrine of devotion, which is defined as "the form of intense love toward Him" (*tvasmin paramopremarūpayā*)[15]. Devotion to God is something by attaining which man becomes immortal (*amṛto bhavati*) and by knowing which he becomes self-satisfied (*ātmārāmo bhavati*).[16] In order to achieve single-heartedness (*ananyatā*), a devotee becomes indifferent to social and religious ordinances (*loka vedeṣu*) which are not congenial to Him (*tadvirodhiṣu*)[17]. Devotion is indicated by the condition of having dedicated all observances whatsoever to Him (*tadarpitākhilācāratā*) as, for instance, in the case of the cow-maids of Vṛndāvana (*yathā vraja gopikānām*).[18] The doctrine of devotion is established by refuting the systems of *karma* (action), *jñana* (knowledge) and *yogā* (concentration), because devotion is its own reward (*phalarūpatvāt*).[19] Devotion results by unflinching adoration of God (*avyāvṛtta bhajanāt*), listening to and singing of the virtues and attributes of God (*bhagavad guṇa śravana kīrtanāt*), grace of the great ones (*mahat kṛpayā*) and divine compassion (*bhagavadkripāleśād*).[20] It is true that a devotee consecrates his self as well as customary and scriptural morality to the Lord (*niveditātmalokaveda*). It does not necessarily imply that anything should be done towards social disorganisation (*lokahānau cintā na karyyā*) or there should be neglect in observing social customs and ceremonies (*lokavyavahāro heyaḥ*).[21] It is clearly stated, however, that amongst the devotees there exists no distinction of birth, learning, appearance, family, wealth and the like (*nāsti teṣu jātividyā rūpakula dhanakriyādibhedaḥ*).[22] Because, a devotee is most concerned with the way how he should love God. His devotion develops in the forms of love of attributes and majesty (*guṇamāhātmyāśakti*), love of beauty (*rūpāśākti*), love of adoration (*pūjāśakti*) love of recollection (*smaraṇāśakti*), attachment to His service (*dāsyāśakti*), attachment to his friendship (*sakhāsakti*), parental affection towards Him (*vatsalyāśakti*), attachment of a beloved wife (*kāntāśakti*), attachment to self-consecration (*ātmanivedanāśakti*), attachment to self-absorption (*tanmayāśakti*) and attachmcnt to permanent self-effacement (*paramavirahāśakti*).[23]

It appears from the above analysis of the *Nārada-Sūtras* that a devotee has nothing to do with religious sacraments, rites and rituals as enjoined in the *smṛtis.* He is least concerned with the social order based upon *varṇāśramadharma.* A devotee has in mind the least distinction between the high and low castes, between the male and the female, between the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant. As the doctrine of *bhakti* does not recognise the traditional divisions of the society, it is but natural that those who had been so long deprived of all religious rights and privileges, the Śūdras and the women, were accorded a place of recognition in the religious life, when they turned to be *bhāgavatas.* This recognition seems to have gone a long way towards restructuring of the social order.

Śāṇḍilya avers that devotion is certainly supreme, since there is the revelation about its superiority to the performers of sacrificial acts, to the followers of knowledge and yoga (*tadeva karmijñāni yogibhya ādhikya-śabdāt*).[24] Again, it has been observed that the province of the higher devotion extends even to the lowest born, from one to another, like universal knowledge (*ānindya yonyadhikriyati pāramparyāt sāmanyavat*)[25]. Thus, we find an agreement between Nārada and Śāṇḍilya on two points. Firstly, the Bhāgavata religion or the cult of *bhakti* has come to replace all previous religious beliefs and practices which were primarily meant for the wealthy, the high-born and the learned. Secondly, the cult of *bhakti* could be followed even by those who had been considered so long as low-born. Thus, an aristocratic gesture was replaced by an egalitarian outlook to the society at large.

Bhaktiratnāvalī

The *Bhaktiratnāvalī*, which is a collection of choicest verses from the *Bhāgavata*, not only emphasises upon the forms of *bhakti*, as we find them in the *Bhakti-Sūtras* of Nārada and *Śāṇḍilya-Sūtras*, but also indicates a social perspective of the cult of *bhakti* or the Bhāgavata religion.

Lord Kṛṣṇa is supposed to reside in all beings (*jananivāso*).[26] As stated by Uddhava, the Lord readily lavishes favour on His devotees even if they are illiterate and uncultured[27]. The difference between *varṇas* (castes) is due to their constituent qualities (*guṇairviprādayaḥ pṛthak*). But whoever among these classes and orders do not attach themselves to the service of the Lord are hurled down below (*na bhajaṃtyavajānamti sthānabhraṣṭāp atantyadhaḥ*).[28] In the words of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself: "Neither the practice of Yoga, nor Sāṅkhya, nor the performance of righteous acts arrests my attention, nor the reading of the Vedas, nor asceticism nor renunciation of worldly life; neither spending money on public works, such as the excavation of tanks, the erection of temples, alms-houses etc. nor almsgiving. Similarly, the keeping of religious vows, the performance of sacrifices, the making of pilgrimages, the restraint of the senses according to the rules of *yama* and *niyama* do not arrest my favourable attention so much as the association with the saints that destroys in evils of all other associations . . . . Among men many a Vaiśya, Śūdra, woman, low-born people, men in whom *rajas* and *tamas* are predominant have, in age after age, reached my lotus feet by association with saints."[29] The saints are those blessed beings who are beloved of the Lord of Vaikuṇṭha (*vaikumṭhapriya*).[30] It is enjoined that by once hearing the name of God (*bhagavat*) even the Caṇḍāla is saved (*yannāma sakrichavaṇātpukkasopi vimucyate*).[31] The expiation of the sin of all sinners is made by the uttering of the name of Viṣṇu.[32] By singing the praises of Viṣṇu, women of Vraja were blessed (*dhunyāvraja strīyaḥ*).[33] The religion of *Satyayuga* is said to be meditation, that of *Tretāyuga* sacrifices, that of *Dvāpara* service and that of *Kaliyuga*, the present age, the singing of the praise of Hari (*kalau tad hari kīrtanāt*).[34] As Prahlāda states, the lowest of the low, the Caṇḍāla, if he has consecrated his mind, speech, desire, wealth and life to the service of the Lord, is superior to the Brāhmaṇa, even if the latter is possessed of the dozen great mental excellences but turns his back to Nārāyaṇa.[35] The rituals enjoined by respective caste and religious orders (*svadharma*) are attached with least importance in comparison with the cult of *bhakti*.[36]

We may derive major features of Bhāgavatism from the precepts contained in the *Bhaktiratnāvalī*. First, God resides in every being in the form of love. No caste, or sex or nationality can claim a monopoly so far as God is concerned. Secondly, the rituals as prescribed in the *śruti* and the *smṛtis*, evidently by the Brāhmanas, have nothing to do with the love of God. Even the philosophical systems fail to satisfy the eternal human discontent that can be perfectly met only by the love of God. A challenge is thus thrown to the brahmanical prescriptions by which religious rights and privileges belong to the upper three *varṇas* and are denied to the Śūdras and women. Thirdly, the social order consisting of the four *varṇas* is recognised. However, no *varṇa* can claim superiority by virtue of its birth alone, nor a Śūdra or Caṇḍāla should be looked down upon for his low birth. The saintliness of one depends to the extent one is blessed by the love of God. "Even persons of sinful origin attain the supreme goal by taking refuge in me alone," says Śrī Kṛṣṇa.[37] A Caṇḍāla possessed of sincere faith and devotion is dearer to God than a Brāhmaṇa, sadly lacking in faith[38]. Thus, the thinkers of the *bhakti* school broke a new ground in the process of the social development in India. They believed in the existence of God in all human beings, high and low, and thus paved the way toward the cult of love for mankind simultaneously with love for God. The roots of neo-humanism may thus be traced in the religion of the *bhāgavatas.*

Caitanyaism: A Social Philosophy

The theory of *bhakti* that had its development till the time of Śrī Caitanya was applied in practice throughout his life. The thought that Lord Kṛṣṇa resides in every being was a firm conviction with Caitanya. That is why, even before his renunciation of the world, he was a beloved friend of the distressed, the poor and the downtrodden. Vṛndāvana Dāsa has said, *duḥkhita dekhile Prabhu baḍa dayā kari,*[39] i.e. "the Lord (Caitanya) used to be very kind at the sight of the distressed". He often took delight in feeding the poor at both Navadvipa and Nīlacala (*duḥkhita kāṅgāl āni karāila bhojane*)[40]. It was due to his feeling of sincere love for all beings that he could even forgive heartless Jagāi and Mādhāi, in spite of their offensive behaviour, and shoulder the burden of their vices (*koṭi koṭi janme yata āche pāpa tor/Ār yadi nā karis sava dāya mor*).[41]

Being distressed at the sorrow of mankind including the poor, the illiterate, the low-born untouchable and the sinner, Caitanya renounced the world and embraced asceticism. He said, *sannyāsenoddharāmyeva tenaduṣṭānapi kṣitau.*[42] Again, according to the description of Murāri, Caitanya promised that he would liberate all beings by taking recourse to life of an ascetic (*uddharāmi janān sarvān sannyāsāśramamāśritah*).[43]

The noblest achievement in Caitanya's life was an extending of the right to the love of God to all including the backward sections of the society. He charged Nityānanda with this noble task by saying: *mūrkha nīca patita duḥkhita yata jana/bhakti diyā kara giyā sabhār mochana*[44], while he was residing at Nīlācala. He also asked

Advaita Ācārya to make the gift of *Kṛṣṇa-bhakti* to all including the Caṇḍālas (*ācaṇḍālādire kario Kṛṣṇa-bhakti dāna*).[45] He himself embraced Rāya Rāmānanda, Sanātana and Yavana Haridāsa without caring to consider their caste or community.[46] Residing at the residence of Vācaspati Miśra, he liberated the invalid, the blind and the deaf (*uddadhāra janam sarvam jaḍāndhavadhirātmakam*).[47] His mission was to reconstruct an egalitarian society under the banner of the name Hari, where there would be no distinction between the ruler and the ruled, the learned and the illiterate, the rich and the poor, the Brāhmaṇa and the Śūdra, the Hindu and the Muslim. (*akās bhediyā nāmer patākā uḍive/rājā prajā eksaṃge gaḍāgaḍi dive*).[48]

Śrī Caitanya did throw up a challenge to the age-old traditional Hinduism that often indulged in lifeless rites and rituals, advising the people to devote themselves to the practice of uttering (*japa*), remembering (*smaraṇa*) and singing (*kīrtana*) the name of Hari only. In *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Caritāmṛtam* (1.4. 25-27) it is stated: *kalau tu kīrtanam śreyaḥ dharmaḥ sarvopakārakaḥ.* Caitanya was determined to impart *bhakti* to one and all through the preaching of the name of Kṛṣṇa (*āpane sabhāre prabhu kare upadeśa/Kṛṣṇa nāma mahāmantra śunaha hariṣe*).[49]

Caitanya never spoke against the *varṇāśramadharma*, but in action he proved to be a great reformist, as he struck at the root of untouchability. He was strongly of the view that even a Caṇḍāla is not to be despised as a Caṇḍāla, if he is attached with the name of Kṛṣṇa, and that a Brāhmaṇa is not to be respected as a Brāhmana, if he is dishonest (*caṇḍāla caṇḍāla nahe yadi Kṛṣṇa bale/vipra nahe vipra yadi asat pathe cale*).[50] He declared; *Caṇḍālopi dvijaśreṣṭha haribhaktiparāyaṇah.* He exalted the position of Rāmānanda Ray, a Śūdra by caste, to that of a religious instructor and listened from him an exposition of the truth. Although Rūpa and Sanātana were Śūdras by caste, they were inspired by Caitanya to compose the treatises on *bhakti* and Vaishnavite Smṛti. Kavirāj Gosvāmī has stated:

Sannyāsī paṇḍitgaṇer karite garvanāsa/
Nīcaśūdra dvārā kare dharmer prakāśa//[51]

Kindness to all living beings (*jive dayā*) was the fountain-source of inspiration to both Lord Buddha and Caitanya. With Śrī Rāma-kṛṣṇa Paramahaṃsa and Swami Vivekānanda, *dayā*, kindness or sympathy with the sufferings of all living beings was transformed into the cult of *jiva-sevā* or service to all beings. As Caitanya realised that the Indian society was in a moribund condition on account of the degradation of the *antyajas* or the low-caste people, so did Vivekānanda. Vivekānanda, by his skilful study of history, arrived at the conclusion that the rise of the Śūdras lies in the logic of history. Śrī Caitanya had begun the process that might lead to the rise of the Śūdras in the society.

References

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[2] Ibid., 4.20.19.
[3] *Caitanya Bhāgavata*. Ādi, chap. VIII.
[4] *Caitanyacaritāmṛta*, Madhya, chap. IX.
[5] Isana Nagara. *Advaita Prakāśa*, chap. XIX.
[6] Nityānanda Dasa, *Prema Vilāsa*, VI.
[7] *Caitanyacaritāmṛta*, Madhya, chap. 24-25.
[8] *Kṛṣṇacaitanyacaritāmṛta*, 12/81.
[9] *Caitanya bhāgavata*, Antya, chap. III.
[10] *Bhaktiratnāvalī*, Allahabad, 1918, Introduction, pp. ii-iii.
[11] *Bhakti-sūtras* of Nārada, Introduction.
[12] *The Śāṇḍilya-Śūtram*, Allahabad, 1918, Introduction, p. 3.
[13] B.B. Majumdar, *Caitanya Charitar Upādan*, p. 354.
[14] *Nārada-Sūtra* no. 83.
[15] Ibid., no. 2.
[16] Ibid., nos. 4-6.
[17] Ibid., nos. 8-11.
[18] Ibid., nos. 19-21.
[19] Ibid., nos. 25-26.
[20] Ibid., nos. 36-40.
[21] Ibid., nos. 61-62.
[22] Ibid., no. 72.
[23] Ibid., no. 82.
[24] *Śāṇḍilya Sūtra*, chap. I, no. 13.
[25] Ibid., chap. II. 23.
[26] *Bhaktiratnāvalī*, pp. 1-2.
[27] Ibid., I. pp. 69-74.
[28] Ibid., I, pp. 80-81.
[29] Ibid., II, pp. 50-56.
[30] Ibid., II, p. 49.
[31] Ibid., IV. p. 41; V. 36 (or by uttering His name, *yasya kīrtanāt*).
[32] Ibid., V. 15-25.
[33] Ibid., V. 42.
[34] Ibid., V. 51-52.
[35] Ibid., VI. 16.
[36] Ibid., VII. 26.
[37] *Bhagavad Gītā*, IX. 30-32.
[38] *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, III, 33-7.
[39] *Caitanya Bhāgavata*, Adi. chap. XII.
[40] *Caitanyacaritāmṛta*, Madhya, chap. XIV.
[41] *Caitanya Bhāgavata*, Madhya, chap. XIII.
[42] Pradyumna Misra, *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanyodayāvalī*, 3-18.
[43] Murari Gupta, *Kaḍcā* or *Śrī Kṛṣṇacaitanyacharitāmṛta*, 2.14.22.
[44] *Caitanya Bhāgavata*, Antya, chap. V.

[45] *Caitanyacaritāmṛta*, Madhya, chap. XV.
[46] Ibid., Madhya, chap. VIII, Antya, chap. IV, XI.
[47] Murari Gupta, *op. cit.*, 3-17-16.
[48] Govindadāsa, *Kaḍcā*, p. 8.
[49] *Caitanya Bhāgavata*, Madhya, chap. XXIII.
[50] Ibid., Madhya, chap. I.
[51] *Caitanyacaritāmṛta*, Antya, chap. V.

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For That Sacred Taste: The Rasa Problem in the Works of Rūpa Gosvāmin

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The *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi* (*UN*) by Rūpa Gosvāmin (sixteenth century) is one of the most important works among the numerous Sanskrit theological and literary texts of the Vṛndāvana circle of scholar-disciples of Śrī Caitanya. This small, closely-knit group[1] living far from Bengal and Orissa (though apparently in constant contact with the *bhaktas* of those regions) took on the task of providing a scriptural interpretation for the devotional movement that developed around their leader, Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Among the numerous works that they produced during their long lives, the works of Rūpa have found a special place in the veneration of the later Vaiṣṇava tradition. Besides the *UN*, Rūpa also wrote the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-Sindhu* (*BRS*) which is propaedeutic to the *UN*. The *BRS* presents a general phenomenological and theological analysis of the nature of *bhakti* (devotion), *bhakti*-practices and the *bhakti*-religious experience. It attempts to organize all the varieties of *bhakti* and pseudo-*bhakti* (*bhakti-ābhāsa*) into a unified whole and to place them in relationship with the rest of mainstream, religious belief and practice in India before the sixteenth century.

In the *BRS*, Rūpa develops his general theory of *bhakti-rasa* which is one of his great contributions to the history of religious thought and practice. The *BRS*, however, has the style and method of an introductory text which is based on a survey of the devotional practices and attitudes then extant in India. It only briefly represents the emotional worship and religious experience unique to Śrī Caitanya. Thus when, in the *BRS*, Rūpa comes to the discussion of *madhura bhakti-rasa*, the erotic *bhakti-rasa*, he says: "Because this *rasa* is unsuitable for renunciates, difficult to comprehend and esoteric, it is written of in brief though it is a vast topic."[2] *Madhura bhakti-rasa*, however, is the primary topic of the *UN*, and thus this text contains the unique contribution of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism to the development of *bhakti*. This contribution in turn rests on an interpretation, made by the Vṛndāvana circle, of Caitanya's religious nature and experience. The three attributes that Rūpa assigns to the erotic *bhakti-rasa* (unsuitable for the renounced, difficult to understand and esoteric) and his characterization of it in the beginning of the *UN* as the 'king of *bhakti-rasas*' (*bhakti-rasarāt*) indicate the importance he attached to this *rasa* and to the book in which he discusses it. Therefore, of all the works of the Vṛndāvana circle, the *UN* is the most complete and direct statement of the core of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. For this reason, I shall present here some reflections on the theory and theology of this text.

The UN and its Editions and Commentaries

In spite of its great importance, no full-length study or translation into English has been made of the *UN* though it has been used and summarized by several scholars.[3] The date of the text is not known, but it must have been written after 1541 which is the date of the completion of the *BRS*.[4] Since the *UN* is quoted in the *Bṛhad-vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī* of Sanātana Gosvāmin which was completed in 1554, it must have been written before then.[5]

The text has been published many times with various commentaries. The first edition of the *UN* was the Baharampur edition published originally at the end of the nineteenth century with the commentaries of Jīva Gosvāmin (sixteenth century) and Viśvanātha Cakravartin (seventeenth century). This edition contained a translation into Bengali prose. Another edition of this text with the same commentaries was published by Nirṇaya Sāgara Press in Devanagari script in the Kāvya-mālā series (1913). The next was the semi-critical edition (1954) of Purī Gosvāmin with the same commentaries. It contained an unnamed verse translation of the text written in the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries. The most recent edition of the *UN* was that of Haridāsa Dāsa with the commentary, previously unpublished, of Viṣṇudāsa, a disciple of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja (sixteenth century). Though none of these was a critical edition and all contained mistakes and misprints, among them, the form of the text has become fairly well set. The two commentaries of Jīva and Viśvanātha are important from the point of view of doctrine while that of Viṣṇudāsa is helpful in exegesis and in providing further examples for the theses of the main text. In spite of the fairly correct form of the text and of the commentaries, the text remains difficult to interpret because of the complexity of its topic, its ambiguous use of language and the highly ornate and poetic nature of the examples, which often depend on suggestion (*dhvani*) to convey the meaning exemplified. These are doubtless reasons why this text has not been seriously studied before. Even the commentators disagree widely on many of the important verses.[6]

Three Aspects of a Definitive Study of the UN

A definitive study of the *UN* would contain at least three aspects. These are: the conceptual background of the *UN*, the systematic theology of the text itself and its influence on the later literary and religious traditions in Bengal. The first aspect of the study is a contextual study, in which 'context' here means primarily the previously and concurrent aesthetic and religious ideas. The second aspect of the study involves the interpretation and understanding of the text itself with the tools of text-criticism and hermeneutics (interpretation theory). And the last has two parts, one being the attempts to gauge the influence of the text on later, diverse traditions and the other, the study of the history of the interpretation of the text within a single tradition. In this way, a comprehensive understanding of the *UN* can be gained as an expression of a religious lived-experience shaped by history and which in turn shapes subsequent history. Such a study is far too large to encompass within the scope of a short essay such as this. Therefore only the first aspect will be dealt with here in some detail, the remaining two only briefly.

The Rasa Problem

Among the numerous subjects that might be taken up in studying the conceptual background of the *UN*, one of the most important concerns the *rasa* theory of the text. *Rasa* is a term applied by the Sanskrit aestheticians to the aesthetic experience proper. It is also a term used in the medical texts to analyze flavours (and life-renewing or prolonging portions, *rasāyaṇa*), and in alchemical texts, it occurs in discussions of the transformation of mercury into gold. In each of these three contexts, the meaning of the term is quite distinct. Rūpa, however, in his *BRS* and *UN* applies the term *rasa*, borrowed from the aestheticians, to the religious experience aroused by devotion towards Kṛṣṇa. But Rūpa's *rasa* theory differs significantly from that of the classical Sanskrit aestheticians such as Ānandavardhana, Abhinavagupta and Mammaṭa. Instead, it shows more similarity to the earlier, simpler *rasa* theories of Bharata or Bhaṭṭa Lollaṭa. The *rasa* theory of Bharata, in turn, is closer to its roots in the concept of *rasa* in the medical and alchemical text; in that, a more concrete conception of *rasa*, analogous either to the flavour of food or a transformation of substance, is proposed.[7]

Bhaṭṭa Lollaṭa, an early commentator on the *Nāṭya-śāstra* of Bharata, takes *rasa* and lasting emotion (*sthāyibhāva*) to be the same, differing only in their intensity. He interprets Bharata's *rasa-sūtra*: *vibhāvānubhāva-vyabhicāribhava-samyogādrasa-niṣpattiḥ*[8] in a straightforward manner. There is a casual relationship between the *vibhāvas* and the *sthāyī*; *rasa* is an intensified form of the *sthāyī* and the primary locus of *rasa* is in the subjects of a play (Rāma, Sītā, etc.[9]). Rūpa, for the most part, agrees with all these propositions. For Rūpa, the *sthāyībhāva* itself becomes *rasa* when the appropriate *vibhāvas*, *anubhāvas* and *vyabhicāribhāvas* are portrayed or verbalized in plays or poetry.[10]

The *vibhāvas* for Rūpa, are the causes (*hetu*) of the tasting of the *sthāvī*.[11] *Rasa* is also an intensified form of the *sthāyī*. The *sthāyi* in *bhakti-rasa* is Kṛṣṇa-*rati* (love for Kṛṣṇa) which is by its nature joy (*ānanda-rūpa*), and this joy, through the *vibhāvas*, is enjoyed, i.e., experienced, and intensified.[12] Furthermore, the associates of Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa himself are the primary ones who experience *rasa*,[13] though Kṛṣṇa's *bhaktas* also experience *rasa*.

Abhinavagupta criticizes the theory of Bhaṭṭa Lollaṭa, or rather allows Śrīśaṅkuka to do so, in the course of his long commentary on the *rasa-sūtra*. For Abhinava, the generalized (*sādhāranībhūta*) *sthāyībhāva*, or alternatively, the impression (*vāsanā*) of the *sthāyībhāva*, perceived by consciousness freed from its adjuncts, is *rasa*.[14] In another place, *rasa* is described as a testing of the joy of the consciousness coloured by the impression of the *sthāyībhāva* aroused by suitable *vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas* couched in language and which communicate with the heart of the spectator.[15] This occurs when the self succeeds in freeing itself from its worldly attachments and identifications which act as barriers to the experience.[16] The *vibhāvas*, etc. expressed in plays or poetry generalize and manifest *rasa* through the power in language called suggestion (*dhvani*).

One of the ramifications of Abhinava's theory is that *rasa* can only be experienced by the audience of a play or poem; the actors and the subjects (*anukārya*) do not experience *rasa*. They experience only *bhāva*. For Rūpa, however, as well as for Bhaṭṭa Lollaṭa, the subjects are the primary loci of the *rasa* experience, though Rūpa limits this to only *bhakti-rasa*. With respect to ordinary *rasa*, he apparently agrees with some form of the classical opinion.[17] In this way Rūpa differs from Bhaṭṭa Lollaṭa.

Since Abhinava, in arguing his theory of manifestation, *abhivyakti*, (as opposed to Bhaṭṭa Lollaṭa's theory of production, *utpatti*), criticizes several of the earlier, simpler *rasa* theories (similar to Rūpa's theory) and since his theory gained pan-Indian acceptance through Mammaṭa's *Kāvya-prakāśa*, how is it that Rūpa, writing six centuries later than Abhinava, has overlooked his telling criticisms and much more subtle theory? Was Rpūa ignorant of the classical theory? He never quotes the *Kāvya-prakāśa*, though he does refer once, disparagingly, to the *Sāhitya-darpaṇa*.[18] Perhaps he knew of the classical theory but thought more of another *rasa* tradition differing from the classical one. The peculiarity of Rūpa's *rasa* theory suggests that a separate *rasa* tradition existed alongside the classical theory unconcerned with (or unaware of) the latter's criticisms. The distinct tradition, though lacking the philosophical subtlety of Abhinava's theory, may have been more popular than the Kashmiri tradition in some parts of India, particularly Bengal and South India.

An examination of the commentarial tradition built up around the *Kāvya-prakāśa* indicates that though the text was cultivated and commented on in Mithila and Orissa from the thirteenth century onwards, it seems to have remained on the periphery of Bengal's intellectual life until Paramānanda Cakravartin's commentary towards the end of the fifteenth century or beginning of the sixteenth century.[19] From the end of the sixteenth century on, numerous commentaries on the *Kāvya-prakāśa* were written by Bengali writers belonging to the *Navya-nyāya* school of Bengal.[20] Rūpa, who lived in the first half of the sixteenth century may have been more familiar with this other *rasa* tradition and found it more suitable for his application of *rasa* to religious experience. That is to say, another *rasa* tradition was dominant in Bengal until the time of Rūpa or shortly afterwards when the *Kāvya-prakāśa*, the main vehicle of Abhinava's *rasa* theory, entered and became dominant. Another possibility is that Rūpa's family which was from Karnataka, may have brought this tradition with them when they migrated in the fourteenth century.[21]

The outlines of a chain of transmission for such a *rasa* tradition can be traced in a succession of aesthetic works existing somewhat apart from the main lines of Sanskrit aesthetic theory and which set forth *rasa* theories similar to Rūpa's. Such a tradition would, as all *rasa* speculations seem to, begin with Bharata, pass through Bharata's commentator Bhaṭṭa Lollaṭa, on to the *Agni Purāṇa*[22] and then to Bhoja. With Bhoja (*Śṛṅgāra-prakāśa* and *Sarasvatī-kaṇṭhābharaṇa*) *rasa* becomes intimately connected with *śṛṅgāra* (the erotic) *rasa*[23] and from him it passed to Śāradātanaya (*Bhāva-prakāśana*), then to Śiṅgabhūpāla (*Rasārṇava-sudhākara*)[24] and finally to Bhānudatta (*Rasamañjarī*, etc.).[25] Other possible links in this tradition might be Rudraṭa (*Kāvyālaṅkāra*) and Dhanañjaya (*Daśa-rūpaka*). The classical tradition of aesthetic theory (at least as it concerns *rasa* theory) also begins with Bharata but passes through Ānandavardhana (*Dhvanyāloka*), Abhinavagupta (*Abhinava-bhāratī* and *Dhvanyāloka-locana*), Mammaṭa (*Kāvya-prakāśa*), Mammaṭa's many commentators, Viśvanātha (*Sāhitya-darpaṇa*) Appayya Dīkṣita (*Citra-mīmāmsā*) and finally Jagannātha (*Rasa-gaṅgādhara*).

The typological differences between the *rasa* theory of Abhinava-gupta and Rūpa's *rasa* theory involve differing reasons for the *alaukika* (transcendent) nature of *rasa*. In Abhinava's theory, it is the process of aesthetic enjoyment itself which is *alaukika*. Therefore, theoretically anyone, provided he has cultivated himself as a *sahṛdaya* (connoisseur), can experience *rasa* through a poem or drama on any topic. This is so because the *rasa* experience is based, in part, upon *vāsanās*, impressions of emotions from previous experiences, which are present in all people. For Rūpa, however, the special nature of the *sthāyibhāva* makes *rasa* transcendent. Rūpa's *sthāyibhāva*, *Kṛṣṇa-rati*, appears specially in the mind of the *bhakta* to become the cause of the *bhakti-rasa* experience. Though it assumes the form of a *vāsanā*, it is not a *vāsanā* common to all men.[26] In fact, very few men possess it.[27] This *vāsanā*, in turn, responds only to certain subject-matters in poetry and drama, that is, only to the *līlā* of Kṛṣṇa. Thus the content of art becomes very important for Rūpa, whereas, with Abhinavagupta's *rasa* theory, the content is relatively unimportant.

As pointed out earlier, the *rasa* tradition coming through Bhoja raises the erotic *rasa* to a dominant position. Bhoja, in fact.

says the other *rasas* originated out of the erotic. Rūpa also makes *madhura*, his name for the erotic *rasa*, more important than all the other *rasas*.[28] This leads us directly into the centre of the *UN*. The discussion of erotic love with all its multiple forms and aspects, and, in the middle of all this, of the *nāyikā*, Rādhā, gains its fullest treatment in the pages of the *UN*. Many questions about Rādhā have been raised in discussions of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. Is she a goddess or an analogue of the soul; is she Kṛṣṇa's own consort or married to another; what is the importance of her emotions for the aspiring *bhakta*, etc.? These questions relate to the systematic theology of the *UN*. In a *rasa* theory so closely connected to content, the proper understanding of the answers to these questions is extremely important. A small mistake in content can disfigure or destroy *rasa*.

The Systematic Theology

Only a brief glimpse into the system of the theology of the *UN* can be given here. However, in studying the meaning of the *UN* as a self-contained expression of religious experience and belief, a number of interesting questions arise. Who, for instance, or what is Rādhā, and what is the nature of her relationship to and interaction with Kṛṣṇa? It is interesting to note that though the text is named the *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi*, "the blazing sapphire," a clear reference to Kṛṣṇa, it is really about Rādhā and her friends. The position occupied in the text by Kṛṣṇa is relatively small. Kṛṣṇa is discussed briefly in the first chapter and his friends in the second chapter. The rest of the chapters are about the *gopīs*, especially Rādhā, her friends, messengers, etc. This indicates how Rādhā has overshadowed Kṛṣṇa in the eyes of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. Of course, Kṛṣṇa is present throughout the text, in the sense that he is the sole object of Rādhā's love and longings. Is Rādhā, as some have suggested, a complex metaphor for the soul and her love relationship with Kṛṣṇa an analogy for the soul's yearning and quest for God? Or is the position she occupies in the theology of quite a different sort? I would argue, from the point of view of this text, that Rādhā is not a metaphor for anything, but an object of worship and a power for worship. Rūpa never says that one should, or is even capable of, loving Kṛṣṇa like Rādhā. Her love arises out of her very nature (*svarūpa*).[29] It does not require cultivation or practice. She is the finest example of *samarthārati*, love in which the desire for enjoyment becomes totally united with love for Kṛṣṇa.[30] Her *bhāva* has reached a state of excellence that is beyond words and argument.[31] For someone to imagine that he too might love Kṛṣṇa like Rādhā is the height of hubris. But, one might experience her joy by becoming her friend (*sakhi*). The details of this relationship are too complex to go into here.

Reflecting in a general manner on the treatment of Rādhā in the *UN* raises the suggestion that she represents an interesting variation on the rise of the goddess which occurred in the Indian religious world beginning around the seventh or eighteenth centuries AD. Two aspects of the goddess are present in her various forms in Bengal. These are the goddess as mother and the goddess as lover. Both of these aspects may have once been a part of Rādhā's primal character, as, for instance, in Rādhā's double role of mother and lover to Kṛṣṇa in the *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa* and in the first verse of Jayadeva's *Gīta-Govinda.* In Rūpa's text, the lover side of Rādhā has eclipsed that of mother.[32] The development of the goddess in Śaktism has been just the opposite, the mother side of the goddess gaining dominance. Thus Rādhā is regarded as *priyā* and Kālī as *mā* (mother). A phenomenological study of Rādhā in comparison to her counterpart, Kāli or Durgā, would throw some light on the religious experience of woman, that is to say, woman experienced as a sacred reality, in Bengal.[33]

Later Influence

The *UN* has influenced later traditions primarily in three areas. Most immediately, the *UN* has influenced later Vaiṣṇava tradition. To understand this, a study of the commentarial disputes such as that between Jīva and Viśvanātha is necessary. Though living within a century of each other, they championed radically opposed views about the meaning of the text concerning the *svakīya/parakīya* debate.[34] The shift from *svakīya* to *parakīya* represents a drastic change in position in the Vaiṣṇava tradition. To these commentarial debates may be added the surviving accounts of councils held at various times during the following centuries to decide and legislate on these issues of doctrine. Again, the earlier councils upheld *svakīya* and the later *parakīya*.

The history of the translation of the *UN* into Bengali, provides interesting illustrations of the changing interpretation of the text. Perhaps the earliest partial commentary on the *UN* (aside from the ones mentioned above which are purely in Sanskrit) is in the form of a collection of Sanskrit verses and Bengali songs called the *Govinda-rati-mañjarī* by Ghanaśyāma Dāsa[35] in the seventeenth century. Then comes the *Rasa-kalpa-vallī* by Rāmagopāla Dāsa in the same century which depends a great deal on the *UN*. His son, Pītāmbara Dāsa, expanded the descriptions and illustrations of the heroine (*nāyikā*) section of his father's work in a text called the *Rasamañjari* towards the end of that century. The *Rasa-kālikā* of Nandakiśora Gosvāmin, who wrote in the eighteenth century, is another example of a Bengali text depending on and interpreting the *UN*. There are undoubtedly many more works of this type as yet unexamined.

The second important area of influence of the *UN* is on the later literary tradition. This area includes the Vaiṣṇava *padāvalī* (collections of Bengali songs), the *maṅgala-kāvyas* and *pāñcāli* compositions. Some work has been done on this topic, but the *padāvalī* literature is so vast that much more is needed. Many of the *padas* (songs) were conceived as illustrations for Rūpa's text. A comprehensive understanding of this vast literature can help one gauge the impact of the *UN* on Bengali literature even as it moved into the modern period; on Michael Madhusudana Datta and Tagore, for instance.

The last area of influence of the *UN* is on the Sahajiyā religious literature and movements. By Sahajiyā I mean the network of religious sub-sects which take the love affair of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa to be paradigmatic of liberation by sexual ritual. In this group I include Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās, the Bāuls, the Kartābhajās and numerous other smaller sects some existing before Caitanya and some which have sprung up in Bengal over the last two or three centuries. An early work called the *Siddhānta-candrodaya* attributed to Mukundadāsa Gosvāmin, a disciple of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, appears to be a starting point for the development of post-Caitanya Sahajiyā-Vaiṣṇavism. It is heavily influenced by the *UN*. Obviously, a work which examines in such detail the erotic love affair between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa such as the *UN* would have a profound influence on these sorts of sub-sects. Their interpretations of the *UN* demands as careful a study and as much consideration as other interpretations. As far as I know, no study of the relationship between this text and the literature and practices of these sects has been made.

Conclusion

Rūpa Gosvāmin's *rasa* theory, as embodied in the *BRS* and the *UN* has been the main focus of this paper. This theory ties the two texts closer to Bhojarāja's aesthetic tradition than to Abhinavagupta's. Bhoja's is a tradition that takes one *rasa* to be predominant; that *rasa* is *śṛṅgāra*. This finding may possibly teach us something about the history of aesthetics in Bengal. It might be that the *Kāvya-prakāśa*, the main bearer of the Kashmiri aesthetic tradition, was not widely cultivated in Bengal until fairly late, i.e. until the time of the rise of the famous Navya-nyāya school in Navadvipa. Or, it may be that an opposing aesthetic tradition was brought into Bengal with the migration to Bengal of Southern Brāhmaṇa families such as that of Rūpa and Sanātana, and the two traditions coexisted, perhaps struggling between themselves for predominance.[36] More research in this area needs to be done before any conclusion can be reached. As always, one question has led to many others. Whatever the influences of previous *rasa* theories on Rūpa were, the fact remains that in applying the concept of *rasa* to religious experience and in giving in the systematic, well-thought-out treatment he has, he has broken with previous traditions and made a unique contribution to the history of religious thought.[37] The application of the concept of *rasa* to religious experience has another advantage, however. The word *rasa* suggests other, more concrete conceptions of *rasa* such as those in medicine and alchemy. Thus the term becomes multifaceted and gains a multiplicity of dimensions.[38] The *rasa* is like a thread running through many diverse aspects of Indian culture tying them together. It is pregnant with meaning. To use another image, *rasa* is like a thread suspended in the fluid of Indian culture around which have crystallized many of the central ideas and beliefs of the culture.[39] The *BRS* and the *UN* gain their importance from the fact that they provide the most cohesive and thoughtful exposition of that thread and that crystalline structure.

Finally, the *rasa* theory of the *BRS* and the *UN* has provided a model for religious experience in many later Bengali religious traditions including Śākta ones, and, in some form, the quest for *rasa* is still an important way in which religious aspirants seek to experience the sacred, either through literature or special practices, in many parts of modern India.

REFERENCES

[1] There are traditionally said to be six Gosvāmins who belonged to this group: Sanātana, Rūpa, Jīva, Gopāla Bhaṭṭa, Raghunātha Dāsa and Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa. However, the authors, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja and Kavi Karṇapura, should also be included among them as should others such as Bhūgarbha Gosvāmin and Lokanātha who were part of the group but did not write.

[2] *BRS*, 3.5.2.

[3] S.K.De, Majumdar, Haridāsa Dāsa, Kapoor, etc.

[4] De, *The Early History of the Vaisnava Faith and Movement in Bengal*, p. 162.

[5] Sukadeva Singha, p. 260.

[6] For instance, on verse 1.21, Jīva and Viśvanātha have written long commentaries using the evidence of the verse to support radically opposed views concerning the Svakīyatva and Parakīyatva of the *gopīs* (cowherdesses).

[7] See R.K. Sen, *Aesthetic Enjoyment*.

[8] Bharata, *Nāṭya-śāstra*, 6.32. "From the combination of *vibhāvas, anubhāvas* and *vyabhicāribhāvas, rasa* is produced". *vibhāva, anubhāva*, and *vyabhicāribhāvas* are the causes, effects and accompanying emotions of the main or dominant emotions (*sthāyī*). When these are portrayed in poetry or drama, they are given the technical names, *vibhāva*, etc.

[9] Abhinavagupta, *Abhinava-bhāratī*, edition of Dr. R.S. Nagar, p. 271. One should note that Mammaṭa's account of Bhaṭṭa Lollaṭa's *rasa* theory seems to differ from the account given by Abhinavagupta. Abhinava's account, however, is very difficult to understand. The three points mentioned here are, nevertheless, clear.

[10] *BRS*, 2.1.4-5. *UN*, 1.3, *svādyatāṃ madhurā raitḥ nītā*.

[11] *BRS*, 2.1.14.

[12] Ibid., 2.1.9-10.

[13] *BRS*., 2.5.108; *UN*, 1.21, 5.3.

[14] Abhinavagupta, *Abhinava-bhāratī*, p. 283.

[15] Ibid., *Dhvanyāloka-locana*, ed. Rāmasāgara Tripathi, vol. 1, p. 74.

[16] Ibid., *Abhinava-bhāratī*, p. 276.

[17] Rūpa, *BRS*, 2.5.107.

[18] De points out that Rūpa, in his *Nāṭaka-candrikā*, does not speak favourably of Viśvanātha's *Sāhitya-darpaṇa. Early History of the Vaiṣṇava Faith and Movement*, p. 201.

[19] Paramānanda Cakravartin is believed to be one of Sanātana Gosvāmin's teachers. (See Gaurināth Sastri's Introduction to his edition of Paramānanda's commentary on the *Kāvya-prakāśa*). If this is true, Rūpa must have known something of the *Kāvya-prakāśa*, making his silence on it puzzling.

[20] See S.K.De, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, pp. 156-77. Perhaps the *Kāvya-prakāśa* was among the treasures brought back from Mithila by Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya or Raghunātha Śiromaṇi along with the *Tattva-cintāmaṇi*.

[21] This is supported by the fact that Siṅgabhūpāla, author of the *Rasārṇava-sudhākara*, who is often quoted by Rūpa, was a fourteenth century king of Veṅkatagiri.

[22] S.M. Bhattacharya says that only Bengali and Devanagari MSS. of the *Agni Purāṇa* exist and that this indicates the importance of this text in eastern India and Bengal. It is often quoted by Bengali writers on aesthetics. *The Alaṃkāra-section of the Agni Purāṇa*, preface, p. 1.

[23] Bhoja's importance for the Bengal Vaiṣṇava tradition is discussed by S.P. Bhattacharya in "Bhoja's Rasa-ideology and its Influence on Bengal Vaiṣṇava Rasa-śāstra" *Journal of the Oriental Institute*, Baroda, vol. 13, pp. 106-19.

[24] S.P. Bhattacharya argues that the *Rasa-sudhākara* cited by Rūpa is not the *Rasārṇava-sudhākara* of Siṅgabhūpāla as S.K.De thought it was but a work now lost to us. *Journal of the Oriental Institute*, Baroda, vol. 4.

[25] A similar line of transmission is suggested by S.N. Ghoshal Shastri in vol. 2 of his *Divine Aesthetics*.

[26] Rūpa, *BRS*, 1.3.4-5.

[27] Ibid., 1.1.35.

[28] *UN*, 1.2.

[29] Ibid., 14.42.

[30] Ibid., 14.52-57.

[31] Ibid., 14.226, 229.

[32] It is possible that the mother side has been redirected in the *UN* towards the role of Rādhā as the intermediary between the *bhakta* and Kṛṣṇa, who brings the tiny *Jīva* (living being) into the presence of Kṛṣṇa and protects it. Thus, the relationship of the *bhakta* towards Rādhā is something like that of a child towards its mother. On the other hand, the Śākta who worships the goddess as the mother, is not solely a mother worshipper. Sometimes he identifies himself with Śiva and relates to the goddess as a lover.

[33] There is actually another aspect of the religious experience of woman, that of the goddess as sister. This is clearly evident in an early quasi-Buddhist, quasi-Hindu tantra called the *Bhūta-Ḍāmara*. What has happened to this sister aspect is a question worthy of research.

[34] This is the debate over whether the *gopīs* were Kṛṣṇa's wives or the wives of others and the ramifications of each opinion on the ideal of *bhakti* which the *gopīs* represent.

[35] Sukumar Sen, *Bāṅgalā Sāhityer Itihāsa*, vol. 1, pt. 2, pp. 21-22.

[36] S.P. Bhattacarya has suggested the great uncle of Viśvanātha, Caṇḍidāsa, participated in a debate against an opponent who held the position of Bhoja's aesthetic theory. "Viśvanātha Kavirāja and his precdecssors", *Journal of the Oriental Institute*, Baroda, vol. 7, 1957.

[37] Before Rūpa, Bopadeva, in his *Muktāphala*, had applied the term *rasa* to the experience of *bhakti*. He accepted the traditional nine *rasa* of the classical *rasa* tradition and cited examples of each from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. His treatment of *rasa* lacks the fine development it received in the hands of Rūpa, however. In fact, there is a circularity in Bopadeva's definition of *bhakti-rasa* The *bhakta* is defined as one who experiences one of the nine forms of *bhakti-rasa* and *bhakti-rasa* is defined as the astonishment felt by a *bhakta* when he hears stories of Viṣṇu (Kṛṣṇa) or of his *bhaktas*. (pp. 164-67).

[38] *Rasa* conceived as a medicinal cure for *saṃsāra* and as an identity-transforming agent are two important additions to the multi-faceted conception of *rasa* as a religious experience.

[39] The concept of *rasa* interpenetrates the spheres of art, sexuality, religion, medicine, alchemy, psychology, metaphysics, etc.

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Post-Caitanya Vaiṣṇavite Sects in Bengal

SACHIN MAJUMDAR

Śrī Caitanya, the founder of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, made Nīlācala (Puri) the centre of his activities and directed his followers to propagate his ideal at different parts of India. Nityānanda, who had a special charisma owing to his long association with the Master, was sent in Bengal. But according to a few Vaiṣṇava authors, Nityānanda was deviated from the high ideal of Śrī Caitanya and plunged into the life of comfort and luxury. "In his hands he wore gold bangles and his arms were adorned with gold armlets. His fingers contained costly rings and various necklaces set with pearls, jewels and corals adorned his neck." According to most historians of the earlier generation, to which even R.C. Majumdar was included, the activities of Nityānanda created an atmosphere of anarchy and confusion among the poor and grass-root level followers of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism. The spiritual ideal of non-duality in the idyllic love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa was not understood. They took it in vulgar sense. Being confused they were divided into so many splinter groups like the Ául, Sāiṅ Bāul, Darvesh, Neḍā, Kartābhajā, Spaṣṭadāyaka, Sakhībhāvaka, Kiśorībhajanī, Rāmavallabhī, Jaganmohini, Gauravādī, Sāhebdhanī, Pāgalanāthī etc.

Historically many of these sects had no affiliation with Caitanyaism, though owing to the high esteem in which Śrī Caitanya and his immediate associates were held in society, they had grafted the name of the Master and his important disciples in their own tradition. For example, a few Darvesh sub-sects claim that their sects were founded by Sanātana Gosvāmī. The legend was invented that Sanātana Gosvāmī fled from the court of Hussain Shah in the guise of a Darvesh and met the Master at Banaras. Sanātana did not forget his Darvesh-guise which gave him the chance of meeting Śrī Caitanya, and accordingly, when situation favoured him, he founded the Darvesh sect which comprised persons both from the Hindu and the Muslim community. Sanātana could have taken the guise of a Darvesh on some occasion, but historically he could not have been founder of such sects, because he was one of those in whose hands the theoretical basis of a Vedānta-oriented Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism was outlined. The Darvesh sub-sects belonged to the lower ranks of social hierarchy, basically unrecognised Muslims, very often using Hindu religious idioms.

One point on which stress should be given is that while dealing with the post-Caitanya popular sects of Bengal the earlier writers depended on the leading ideas of their own age. For example, Akṣaya Kumar Datta, from whose Bengali work on the religious communities of India we have special information of these sects, had no personal experience of them. He collected data from the works of the English writers who studied their beliefs and practices, quite superficially, when they came across men of such communities in course of their administrative functions. They were all guided by the idea of Christian superiority and regarded the practices of these sects as vulgar and superstitious. Akṣaya Kumar Dutta was himself tutored in Brahmo tradition (though he claimed himself as a rationalist) and Brahmo morality, and that is why he could not tolerate the methods of their social intercourse, their attitude towards women and many aspects of their ritualistic practices. Although he had a feeling of admiration in regard to their religiously syncretistic attitude, he did not take into account the fact that the vast mass of Bengal peasantry and professionals belonging to the lower strata of the caste-hierarchy was outside the pale of the Smārta-Paurāṇic social ideals.

A few sub-sects of the Bāuls of Bengal claim Śrī Caitanya as the founder of their system, though historically it is not true. They do not publicly expose the way of their approach to the divine. They think that Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā unitedly reside in the human body and there is no need of searching them elsewhere. The source of this idea may be traced to the Sahajayāna forms of Buddhism, the concepts of *upāya* and *prajñā* which were substituted by those of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. They believe that everything of the universe is within the human body. To discover the non-duality of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā within the body is the object of their meditation. This realisation comes only through the understanding of the real self, *the man of the mind*, as they call it in their songs. The love of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā is to be impersonated by the aspirant and his female partner. This is called *prakṛti-bhajanā* (meditation on woman) which was shared alike by a few Darvesh and Sāiṅ sub-sects as well as by the Nayadas who trace their origin to Vīrabhadra, the son of Nityānanda. There is another sub-sect called Gauravādin. The followers of this sub-sect think that Gaurāṅga (Caitanya) is superior to Kṛṣṇa, because he is the combination both of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. They put the idol of Gaurāṅga in their temples to worship him.

Many of the post-Caitanya Vaiṣṇavite sects, as we have remarked above, had no real affiliation to Caitanyaism, though the name of Caitanya is often quoted by them. For example, the Khuśi-Biśvāsī sect believes that its founder Khusi Biswas, a Muslim by religion who lived in the village of Bhaga near Devagrama in the Nadia district, was an incarnation of Śrī Caitanya. Secondly, a few of these sects had earlier links with the *bhakti* movement of northern India. There is a sect called Jaganmohinī which was once very popular in eastern Bengal. The original sect is said to have been founded by one Jaganmohan who was a follower of the celebrated Rāmānanda of northern India. The third patriarch of this sect founded the Jaganmohinī sub-sect in Bengal. They do not worship any idol and consider their preceptor as God himself. They are divided into two categories, namely, the householders and the recluses (*udāsīn*). They have no sacred text of their own, save a few hymns which were publicly sung or recited. Specimens like "O brother saint, if I have to have my preceptor, who is the complete *brahman*, I am to leave all the attraction of the world to resort to the feet of the Lord. It is the only way. In all the Vedas and in all the Śāstras it has been decided that none can lead us without the *guru*."

This special insistence on *guru* or preceptor as the embodiment of God himself, is not consistent with the concept of *bhakti*, because the latter implies direct communion between God and the devotee. In most cases, the founder of the sub-sect is regarded as the supreme being. There are of course exceptions. The Spaṣṭadāyakas do not recognise the godship of their preceptor. They do not even make any distinction between the males and the females, and live in the monastery unitedly. The same holds good in the case of the Sahebdhanīs. This sect is said to have been named after one Sahibdhain, who lived in a forest between the villages of Shaligram and Dogachiya in the Nadia district, and founded by one Dukhiram Pal belonging to the pastoral Gopa caste. This sect was popularised by Dukhiram's son Charan Pal and his disciple Kuber Sarkar who was a celebrated composer of folk-songs. In one of his songs he tells that his native village Bṛttihuda is superior to Vṛndāvana where the name of Dīnabandhu (God) is heard day and night. The Sahibdhanis do not believe in any preceptor and worship any idol. On every Thursday they worship a sacred seat with various fruits and food offered by the people. At the dead of night they eat these offerings collectively. Every year they hold a grand fair at Agradwip in the district of Burdwan.

But most of the sects are *guruvādī* believing in the omniscience of the *guru* or preceptor. Among these sects, the Kartābhajās deserve special mention. They claim their theoretical affiliation with Caitanyaism but their views are also influenced by Islam and Christianity. The sect was founded by one Ramsaran Pal belonging to the Sodgopa community. Its source is traced to a holy man called Āulechānd who made no distinction between the Hindus and the Muslims. He had twenty-two disciples among whom Ramsaran was one. The term *kartā* (maker or creator) means God. It was probably coined by Syed Alaol, the Muslim poet. There were many groups of the Kartābhajā sect, but Ramasaran Pal was the leader of the largest group. Some of these groups hold that Lord Kṛṣṇa, Śrī Caitanya and Āulechand are same. They believe that Śrī Caitanya was reborn as Āulechand and that there is no difference between them. They do not believe in caste and sectarian difference. During the time of initiation the preceptor forbids his disciple to eat meat, take wine, tell lie and commit adultery. But free mixing of men and women is allowed. The preceptor is called *mahāsaya* and the supreme of the *mahāsayas* is known as *kartā*. The wife of Ramasaran Pal is deified and called Satī-Mā. Every year at the time of *dol-pūrṇimā* (the day of Holi celebration) an assemblage of different Kartābhajā sub-sects take place at Ghoshpara (Kalyani) in the Nadia district. The fair is attended by Muslims as well. The Kartābhajās think that the human body is the gift of *kartā* and it is the dwelling place of *jīvātman* or human soul. It should not be right to live in a place without paying any tax. So the money paid by the Kartābhajās to their *kartā* is also called tax or rent. They call the people of their own sect *bhagavat-jana,* meaning god-chosen persons, while those who do not belong to the creed are called *aihika-jana* or temporal persons. Āulechand had forbidden ten *karmas* or deeds which are three *kāya-karmas* (physical deeds comprising adultery, stealing and killing), three *mana-karmas* (mental deeds comprising the desire for adultery, stealing and killing) and four *vākya-karmas* (deeds by words comprising lying, speaking ill, unnecessary talking and speaking abnormally). Like the followers of Caitanyaism the Kartābhajās consider love as the main theme of meditation. Faith in the miraculous power of Áulechand, his ten commandments, the confession of the previous guilts, the oneness of Kṛṣṇa, Gaurāṅga and Áulechand, etc. are interesting features of their way of life.

In Nadia there is another sub-sect which is called Ramaballabhi. It is said that they defying the leadership of the Pālas, the founder of the Kartābhajā Sect, founded an organisation at Bansabati in the name of Ramaballabha. Krishnakinkar Gunasagar and Srinath Mukhopadhaya took the main initiative. They say that Ramaballabha was the founder of this sub-sect. They think that Ramaballabha was like the god Śiva himself. Thus they hold a festival of the day of Śivacaturdaśī in the village of Panchghara. During this festival they read the *Bhagvad Gītā*, the *Koran*, and the *Bible*. They think all religions are alike and gathering together all the men of different creeds and sects take their food unitedly. They offer fried rice and beef to their supreme lord. In their festivals they pay offerings to Jesus Christ, Mohammad and Nanak.

There is another sect in the name of Haribala and their main religious function is to sing *kīrtana*. The preceptor is their God and thus to remember always the preceptor is a compulsion to them. Considering the body of the own preceptor as the body of God they worship it. The Haribalas have no book for their own community and thus the singing of hymns is their main object. They sing: "Oh, My mind hear me. Live your life with the name of Hari. Leaving other thoughts think for the preceptor and fix your attention to the feet of him."

They think that Kṛṣṇa is the incarnation of Hari and thus they place the conjugal idol of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā in the temple and worship them. At day time they offer rice to the idols and in the evening they sing *kīrtan*. They are the first to introduce the system of Hariloot (sweet offerings to scatter). It is very interesting to note that the people of different castes and creeds belong to this sect and during their marriage and funeral function they perform the respective customs of their own caste and creed. As the dying persons desire before their death the funeral function is done accordingly. Thus the dead body of some men are buried under the grave and some are thrown into the water and some are burnt. Both in East Bengal and in West Bengal this sub-sect is to be found. There are many followers who live at Satkshira in the district of Khulna (Bangladesh) in the district of Jessore (Bangladesh), at Khandaghosh in Burdwan (West Bengal) at Jaugaon (West Bengal). At Baranagore (in 24-Parganas) there was a religious centre led by Golokchand where there was no idol. Recently Premchand Gosain has founded a religious centre there.

There is a group of Vaiṣṇavas in Bengal who live on begging at night. This Vaiṣṇava sect is called Rītbhikhāri. From the beginning of the fifth day from the new moon up to the full-moon is considered to be the best time for begging. They do not go to the door of anybody for begging. They use to pass the way on singing and the people would call them to give alms. Sometimes they would beg jointly with three or four persons and a man accompanies them with a pot (*dhāmā*) to collect alms. This pot-bearer is called *dhāmādharā*. Thus the poet sings: "There is a person with Rātbhikārī who is called Dhāmadharā. He does not call the name of Hari and collect the alms from behind." The Rātbhikāri sect at the time of their conversion will beg from three houses after the evening. They live in many places of Bengal. They may also be seen at Uttarpara Serampur and Baidyabati in the district of Hooghly (West Bengal). To them begging at daytime is prohibited.

We have the existence of another sub-sect which is called Balarāmī sect. This sect has been founded by Balarāma Hāḍi and the sect has been named after him as Balarāma. He was born in the village of Meherpur in the district of undivided Nadia (now in Bangladesh). His father's name was Govinda Hāḍi and his mother was Gouramani. In his young age Balarāma served as a watchman in the house of the landlord of the village. One day some gold ornaments of an idol of the house were stolen and consequently the landlord suspected and punished Balarāma. Thus being punished for nothing he became much aggrieved and left the house and finally he was turned into a hermit or *udāsin*. He then founded a sub-sect named after him and this sub-sect is called the Balarāmī sub-sect. The followers of Balarāma believe that Balarāma himself is Śrī Rāmacandra. According to them, in the beginning the universe was in the vacuum and God created the earth with the elements of his body and for this the world is called the *kṣiti*. The terms *kṣaya* (diminishing) *kṣiti* and *kṣetra* (ground) are all synonymous to each other. In another place Balarāma says that people call him Hāḍi. But the term *hāḍi* is not the same which we mean in our ordinary sense. He explains that the term *hāḍi* denotes the term creator or maker. As he creates the bone (*hāḍa*) he has been defined as Hāḍi. Balarāma himself did not express such creed. It is heard that he recognised himself as the creator, preserver and destroyer of this universe. According to his followers Balarāma advised them to speak the truth and thus they consider him as the Parameśvara (supreme God). They say that Balarāma was the speaker (*vācaka*) and he could easily explain the mystery of all the things explicitly. It is said that one day one of his disciples asked him how the world was created. In reply Balarāma said that the earth has come to the existence from refuse. There is an interesting story regarding him. One day Balarāma was bathing in a river and found that the Brahmins were sprinkling water for their dead predecessors (*tarpaṇa*). Observing this Balarāma began to throw water to the river bank with various poses and postures. At this a Brahmin asked him what he was doing. Balarāma replied with fun that he was irrigating his kitchen garden. The Brahmin became very angry and Balarāma said that if it is possible for them to give offerings to their deceased predecessors standing in the water of the Gangas, then why it is not possible for him to irrigate his kitchen-garden from there. During the *ḍolayātrā* festival Balarāma would sit on the *ḍola-mañca* and his followers would worship him with red-powder (*āvīra*) and flowers. There is no distinction of caste-system among them and most of them live the family life. They have no book of their own sect. The Balarāmī sect is divided into two groups. One of them has built a shrine on his grave and worship it. The other group says that there is no such direction of Balarāma and they do not do it.

There is another sect called Sakhībhāvaka. This sub-sect is an offshoot of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa worshippers. The Vaiṣnava followers says that Śrī Caitanya considering himself as woman expressed his emotion of love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa. According to them Śrī Caitanya himself introduced this system of worship. The followers of this sub-sect consider Śrī Kṛṣṇa as their husband and themselves as his maidens (*sakhī*). They worship Kṛṣna through love and dress themselves like the maidens. Śrī Kṛṣṇa enjoys the company of innumerable maidens and likewise they consider themselves as one of those maidens. The Vaiṣṇavas of this sect consider the principal followers of Śrī Caitanya as the maidans of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

The Sakhībhāvakas think the particular *sakhī* in them is the original preceptor of their respective branch. According to them both the preceptor and the disciples are *sakhis* (maiden) and Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the husband both of them and he is the supreme lord to serve. Sometimes they would gather together to sing being divided into two groups belonging to the followers of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā.

There is also another interesting sect Sadhvinī by name. To do anything against the existing norms and forms is their main object of religion or *paramārtha sādhanā.* Being guided by this principle they take food from all the people without any caste distinction. They always use unconventional words in their conversations. Thus say: "Take your food here and there and make your bed in any place." They do not confine the principle in the realm of theory but implement it in their practical life with their best effort and accept it as a compulsion. They think that if they can follow this, God will save them being satisfied.

Except these widely or less known sects and sub-sects there are some offshoots like Hazaratī, Gobraī, Pāgalnāthī, Tilakdāsī, Darpanārāyaṇī and Atibadī; etc. Hazaratī sub-sect was founded by Hazarat, Gobraī and Pāgalnāthī sub-sects were founded by Gobra and Pagalnath respectively and all of them belong to the Muslim community. The main object of the Hazarati sub-sect is to entertain the guests. The Tilakdāsī sub-sect was founded by a follower of Kartābhajā sect who belong to the Sadgopa community and his name was Tilakdāsa. Though in his past life he belonged to the Kartābhajā sect, in his later life he left the company and founded an independent sect and named it after his own name. He recognised himself as the incarnation of God Śiva. Darpanārāyaṇī sect was founded by a Harijan, Darpanārāyan by name. He preached the ideal of unity between God and man.

Certain important aspects of this post-Caitanya religious movements deserve our special attention. These religious communities or 'spiritual clubs' have been called sub-sects because they mostly claim themselves to be the offshoots of Caitanya sect although, as has been shown above, they had no real affiliation with it. The second point which one should not overlook is that all these 'communities of brethren' comprised mainly the agricultural folks and men belonging to the lower occupational crafts. Whatever the original purpose of the teachings of Śrī Caitanya might have been it is a fact that he had stood for the downtrodden. His views were universalised by the social elites under a difficult philosophical garb of Acintyabhedāveda in accordance with the Vedāntic line of thought which had acquired much sophistication in the hands of the Vṛndāvana Gosvāmins. This special class-orientation had created a lacuna in so far as the religious expressions of the simpler peoples were concerned, and the gap was bridged by a class of religious leaders who came from the grass-root levels. They had no glamour of pedegree or wealth or learning. Most of them were perhaps illiterate. But they spoke in peoples' language using popular idioms of simple facts of day-to-day life of the peasantry and craftsmen. They had a spirit of natural liberalism which they preached, and this liberalism did not require any special struggle to get established, because the teachers and their followers mostly belonged outside the pale of the *smārtha-purāṇic* norms of life which was in direct contrast to what was upheld by the elitists.

One significant aspect which has characterised most of these religious communities is the devotion to the *guru* or preceptor who is considered as the human form of God himself. This special insistence on *guruvāda* is probably due to the tantric influence. In the tantras, it is the *guru* who is supreme without whose assistance it is impossible to progress spiritually. *Guru* is Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara. Bengal being the land of tantric culture, the *guru* element could not be avoided, though in pure *bhakti* (by which all these religious systems are characterised) communion between God and individual does not require any external agent. Apart from the tantra, there was the Buddhist Sahajayāna influence as also the influence of the Muslim concepts of *pīrs* and *murshids*. In such a special atmosphere, the cult of *guru* or preceptor has inevitably and invariably came into the forefront.

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Keshub and Caitanya: Brahmo Evangelism and the Indigenous Modernization of Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal

DAVID KOPF

Brahmoism before Keshub Chondra Sen: New-Vedāntism as Reformed Hinduism

Brahmoism, of which I have dealt with comprehensively elsewhere,[1] was the earliest, broadly-inclusive ideology of socio-religious reform in modern India. Its history constitutes a vital episode in the inter-civilizational encounter between India and the West. In content, it was neither purely Western nor Indian, but a syncretism of various redefined elements which ultimately became a new reintegrated tradition among the progressive middle class Hindus of twentieth century India.[2] Brahmoism was the foundation of what we today call Hindu modernism.

The first charismatic hero of the Indian Renaissance and Hindu reformation was Rammohun Roy (1774-1833). Modern India owes much to the immense curiosity and restlessness of his intellect, the depth of his understanding about the major religions of the world and his passion for ridding contemporary Hinduism of its many abuses, especially those facts of the system which tended to exploit and degrade women. Rammohun's greatest contribution, perhaps, was his ideology of salvation for India which he formulated as a response to Western intrusion, and which proved to be a model for subsequent generations of Hindu reformers. Because Rammohun refused to remain complacent about the inhumanity of the qustodians of Hinduism, but also refused to become a Christian convert, he has earned the title "Father of Modern India."[3]

In 1815, Rammohun settled permanently in Calcutta, an event of momentous importance to historians of the Bengal Renaissance.[4] That same year, he published his earliest translation of the Vedānta in abridged form. Though the book leaves much to be desired from a scholarly point of view, its impact on the Hindu Reformation cannot be denied.[5] Rammohun argued that Protestant missionaries were correct in their assertion that Hindus were idol-worshippers. But image worship as then practised in India was an aberration from the authentic monotheistic tradition. In the manner of the British Orientalists, he divided Indian history into a Vedāntic period that provided the authentic model for "the whole body of the Hindu theology law, and literature" and was "highly revered by all the Hindus,"[6] and a later period of "Hindoo idolatory" with its "innumerable gods, goddesses, and temples" which have since been destroying "the texture of society".[7]

In the next couple of years, Rammohun continued to publish more translations of ancient texts to elaborate upon his renaissance view of history. For him, the Upaniṣads and the Vedānta were part of a "montheistical system" which was akin to the Western notion of the "unity of the Supreme Being as sole Ruler of the Universe."[8] By 1820, with the publication of his *Precepts of Jesus*, Rammohun believed that Vedāntism contained a purer form of monotheism than Christianity.[9] He savagely attacked such "fabricated fables" as the doctrine of the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus on the cross," which he felt were all designed to establish the "false identity of Christ with God."[10]

The more Rammohun debated trinitarian Christians, the more support he received from radical Unitarians in England and America. Rammohun actually converted a Baptist missionary named William Adam to Unitarianism and the two of them organized a Calcutta Unitarian Committee in 1823.[11] It was the Unitarian principles of monotheism, social reform in the name of religion, and universalism, which greatly influenced his developing idea of Hindu reformation. Then in 1828, he founded the Brahmo Sabhā, precursor of the later Brahmo Samaj (society of God).[12] He never could do much with the Sabhā because he left for England shortly after its inception never to return.[13]

In 1843, ten years after Rammohun's death in England, Debendranath Tagore established the Brahmo Samaj in Calcutta.[11] Rammohun's works were reprinted while the scriptural source upon which authentic Hinduism was based was reaffirmed as the Vedānta.[15] In 1845, Tagore collaborated with Rajnarian Bose in a publication against trinitarian Christian missionaries called *Vedantic Doctrines Vindicated*. Missionaries had questioned the assertion by Brahmos that the Vedānta expressed a notion of a personal god analogous to Jehovah. In this defiantly nationalistic work, Tagore and Bose accused the Christians of "rushing headlong into the hideous errors of a reckless anthropomorphism." On the other hand, "the Vedānta, while it utterly rejects and condemns such degrading of the deity, conveys to our minds a far loftier, a more adequate, consistent, and ennobling idea of His attributes, by prescribing His worship as the Supreme Regulator of this boundless universe and as the glorious and beneficent originator of all earthly good."[16]

Throughout the 1840s, missionaries and other European observers of the Calcutta scene tended to view the Brahmo Samaj as a "Vedāntic Sabha".[17] But in actual fact, during that very decade, Brahmos were involved in a debate between Vedantists and universalists, the latter of whom repudiated sectarianism in religion along with sectarian scriptures, arguing instead that "all human beings are the children of God and the worshipper of God consider this earth to be his home and all human beings to be his brothers."[18] Akshay Kumar Dutt, a non-theistic Brahmo fellow traveller who believed that natural religion had neither national origins for a revealed source, persuaded Tagore, in 1850, to drop the Vedānta as the book of the Brahmos.[19]

Nevertheless, Vedānta continued to be championed as the one revealed source in Hinduism comparable to the *Bible* and *Koran*. It can be said that a school of thought developed among younger philosophic Brahmos known as neo-Vedāntism and which included such luminaries as Vivekananda and Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya.[20] One Brahmo philosopher, Sitanath Tattvabhusan, actually believed that Tagore's decision to abandon the Vedānta did "a great deal of harm to the Brahmo Samāj" and had a disastrous impact on the new theological scholarship of the Hindu Reformation.[21]

Bhakti Inspiration and Brahmo Evangelism under Keshub Sen

In an autobiographical sketch written later in life, Satyendranath Tagore, one of Debendranath's more able and successful sons, admitted that in the mid-fifties "the progress of the Brahmo Samaj was slow". Then, when his father returned from Simla, "an epoch-making event" took place and a "new chapter in the history of the Brahmo Samāj was opened." It was Keshub's coming into the Samaj that "created a new life" by giving the society a "new image". He recalled how "I also was swept by the tide of the new enthusiasm."[22]

Keshub Chandra Sen (1838-84) was probably the most innovative, charismatic and influential Hindu religious reformer in nineteenth century India. Not only did he start the Brahmo Samaj mission movement which carried Hindu modernism across India, but he provided the inspiration to other great Indian reformers such as Vivekananda, Dayānanda, Dharmapāla, and Sivanath Sastri. He was so conspicuous and controversial a figure that his one time mentor, then arch-rival, Debendranath Tagore, was compelled to admit in 1881 that "whether it be in praise of him or in blame, men cannot drink their daily drop of water without uttering Keshub's name."[23] And abroad, in England, especially, of all the obituary notices of charismatic Indians known in the West, probably none gave more extensive coverage than that of Sen's death on 8 January 1884.[24]

Among those inclined to recall his achievements rather than his shortcomings, Keshub has been viewed as Rammohun Roy's successor who sought to infuse progressive Western values into Hindu theism. Rabindranath Tagore, another of Debendranath's famous sons, saw Keshub as a profound scholar of world religions and a sincere believer in universal harmony.[25] Others, such as Bipin Chandra Pal, discovered in Keshub's writings the seeds of Indian nationalism.[26] There is also little doubt that Keshub was instrumental in initiating the Arya Samaj and the Mahā Bodhi Society.[27]

These tributes to Keshub, when put side by side, which they seldom are, suggest a great adventure of the mind taking place in the Calcutta of the Bengal Renaissance. They suggest that the intellectual giants of the Renaissance, from Rammohun through Keshub to Rabindranath, were all philosophers of inter-civilizational encounter between East and West at work formulating ideologies of salvation for India and the world of the nineteenth century.

But in the immediate socio-cultural context of contemporary Bengal, the intellectual concern for global synthesis gave way to the more pressing need to find indigenous solutions to the reformation of existing institutions and practices. On the provincial or parochial level, Keshub had little choice but to work within the sectarian atmosphere of Bengali religion during his own time. Interestingly enough, though he was attracted to Debendranath's Brahmo style in the 1850s, Keshub expressed little enthusiasm for neo-Vedāntism. Surprisingly, at least for a leader of the Renaissance he began to lean in the direction of Vaiṣṇavism or the *bhakti* tradition of Caitanya. Vaiṣṇavism was looked upon by reformers as "the greatest obstacle to the promotion of the true religion."[28] Tattavabhusan repudiated it for its lack of philosophic depth, its emotionalism, and above all, "its sensuality and disregard of ethical distinction."[29]

Keshub's partisanship for the "medieval excrescene" of Vaiṣṇavism was a radical departure for any Brahmo leader up to the mid-sixties. This Brahmo evangelism, as I have called it elsewhere, which Keshub began flirting with in the 1860s, was in fact a brilliant ploy to widen and deepen Brahmo appeal.[30] In part, Keshub was already responding to the religious orientation of new Brahmo recruits who were no longer the Calcutta-based, Western-educated intelligentsia but were the alienated youth of mofussil towns in North and East Bengal. Men such as Aghore Nath Gupta, Troylokya Nath Sanyal, Dinanath Mozumdar and Nanda Lal Banerji, among others, were part of a new generation who were anxious to reform Hinduism but knew very little English.[31] Their inspiration as Brahmos, though certainly intense and genuine, came less from British sources and more from Keshub's new image of the sixteenth century Vaiṣṇava saint, Caitanya.

The implications of incorporating *bhakti* into Brahmo ideology has not been seen as a key issue which divided Keshub from Debendranath and led to the schism of 1866. No doubt the lack of a progressive social activism by older Brahmos was a crucial factor as was the lack of representative government within the Brahmo Samaj. But equally important was Keshub's new vision of missionaries who might traverse the countryside and convert thousands to the Brahmo faith. Rammohun Roy's unitarian-inspired rationalism and reinterpretation of the Upaniṣads were far too exotic and abstract for most Hindus outside the reach of Calcutta intellectual circles.[32] But there was a great danger, as Keshub would soon learn, that unleashing *bhakti* emotionalism could lead to a betrayal of fundamental Brahmo principles as easily as it could to the revitalization of Vaiṣṇavism to meet the challenge of modernization.

Keshub saw the great potential of transforming the Brahmo Samaj into a mass movement by means of what we today call indigenous modernization. Could he not open the hearts of countless Hindus by pouring the new wine of Brahmoism into the old containers of Vaiṣṇava piety and devotionalism? Keshub turned his back on Vedānta which had continued to remain circumscribed among intellectuals and philosophers as a thinking man's religion. Why was it necessary to go back to the Vedas or to the Upaniṣads for egalitarian and other modern values when Bengal had produced Caitanya, a reformer who had already condemned caste inequality and religous intolerance in the sixteenth century?

It was at this point that Bijoy Krishna Goswami began to play his major role in Brahmo history as the most effective missionary of neo-Vaiṣṇavism or Brahmo evangelism. The circumstances of his birth, early development, and education indicate that Bijoy Krishna Goswami was, among all the Brahmos in the Adi Samaj, the least anglicized. Born in 1841 in Santipur, Nadia district, in the vicinity of the sixteenth century Vaiṣṇava reformation, he was descended from the *advaita* preceptor in Caitanya's movement. His father was a devout Vaiṣṇava priest, his uncle a scholar who roamed about north Bengal offering *mantras* and collecting donations for the local Goswami temple dedicated to Lord Kṛṣṇa.[33]

How Bijoy Krishna underwent a serious identity crisis which ended ultimately in Brahmo conversion is a fascinating story which I have dealt with in some detail in my monograph on the movement's history.[34] Suffice it to say that Bijoy Krishna's new consciousness was a painful birth and that he remained for many years deeply moved by the experience. He never learned English well enough to write in it, but his understanding and defense of Western rationalism was beautifully articulated in Bengali prose.

In the 1860s, Bijoy Krishna supported Keshub against Debendranath.[35] Perhaps he even encouraged Keshub to launch his rebellion. After the schism of 1866, Bijoy collaborated with Keshub in the rather delicate operation of fusing elements of Vaiṣṇavism with Brahmo ideology.[36] There was also the attempt to resurrect Caitanya as a rebel against the Hindu establishment. Soon, with Caitanya standing forth as a champion of Brahmoism, the two protests would merge as one.

After 1866, Keshub relied heavily on Bijoy and not unlikely, the new emphasis on music and street processions in the Samaj was one important result. Possibly, it was Bijoy who suggested that Keshub model himself after Caitanya, but without succumbing to *avatārism* or the belief that he was, as believed of Caitanya, an incarnation of Viṣṇu. Bijoy was then a very strong rationalist and social reformer who saw in Caitanya's image a marvellous opportunity to extend the Brahmo reformation and even reach the masses.[37]

By 1867, the Vaiṣṇava emphasis seems to have changed Keshub's personality. In September of that year, he was described as "no longer being stern, ethical, and full of intellectual bitterness, but thawed into someone tender and full of humility and . . . trusting dependence which dissolved every heart it touched into kindred tears. The didactic devotions of the older Jorosanko pulpit were by an unseen process transformed into an all-piercing pathos, an inseparable sympathy with every form of sin, suffering, and desertion that made our daily services the veritable service of sorrow."[38]

By November, 1867, the *bhakti* tradition had clearly won its way into the new Brahmo church. The *saṅkīrtan* or Vaiṣṇava devotional hymn was introduced, along with street processions characterized by "ecstatic devotion, rapture of the heart . . . zeal and emotional fervor."[39] In the midst of the excitement, Keshub sang for the first time in public. According to Protap Majumdar, "He loudly sang, a thing which his natural shyness had never permitted him to do before; he had never been seen to weep, but now streams of tears ran down his handsome face. He was turned into a new man."[40]

Protap Chandra, who spent much of his life weathering the storms of Keshub's "religious aberrations", asked in one place "why did Brahmos borrow the old fashioned plebian forms of Vaiṣṇava music and musical appurtenances?"[41] Though Majumdar never answered the question, his comments are revealing. After all, he tells us, Vaiṣṇavas were "neither high socially" nor "distinguished by modern education".[42] Moreover, they "were noted for grotesque personal habits, intense wild devotional excitement leading sometimes to inconveniences."[43] Majumdar, it should be stressed, was seeking to win over Keshub to Unitarian Christianity. On 24 January 1868, at the *mandir* consecration ceremony, the Vaiṣṇava influence was never greater. Majumdar grimly reported that "Keshub held his *nagar saṅkīrtan* with great flags inscribed with theistic mottoes . . . Vaiṣṇava *kīrtans* had degenerated into mobbish assemblies and it required great moral courage and deep religious compulsion to be able to borrow and reform them."[44]

The success of Keshub's mission movement in the mid-sixties was largely due to Bijoy Krishna and the enthusiasm which neo-Vaiṣṇavism generated throughout rural Bengal. Neo-Vaiṣṇavism in the guise of Brahmoism reached out to all young men feeling a sense of alienation or identity crisis generated largely by conflict between family obligations and new Western ideals imbibed in the class-room.[45] Often, Brahmo conversion was the only way many young persons could resolve their conflicts and achieve a new identity.[46] Sivanath Sastri has recorded in his *Ātmacharita* (autobiography) how he, a Śākta, joined Keshub in the face of ostracism and persecution at the very time when Vaiṣṇava influence was at its height in the Brahmo Samaj.[47]

Indeed, the years 1868 and 1869 were a kind of turning point in Sastri's life. In the former year, he identified himself with the Keshubites by joining them openly in their Vaiṣṇava-inspired *saṅkirtan* procession. There he sang the Sanyal *sangit*, which proclaimed the equal rights of men and women while repudiating caste.[48] In August 1869, Sastri was officially initiated as a Keshubite[49] Brahmo at an impressive ceremony at the *mandir*.[50] His father was furious. Then, when the young man renounced his sacred thread to the great satisfaction of the Brahmo community, his father grew abusively vindictive.[51] Things went from bad to worse until finally, Sivanath broke off relations with his "tyrannical father" who drove his son out of house and for the next nineteen years refused to see him.[52]

Vaiṣṇavism was working well for Keshub. Though the masses remained outside the pale of Brahmo mission activity, the intelligentsia flocked to Bijoy and Keshub in great numbers. Would it not a marvellous thing if the spirit of Caitanya could be revived under the manner of the Brahmo Samaj? In June, 1868, at the East India railway junction town of Monghyr, in Bihar, Keshub publicly assumed the pose of a Brahmo Caitanya, but with disastrous results. Protap Chandra Majumdar has described the event with obvious misgivings. Bengali railway clerks sympathetic to Keshub came to hear him. The congregation was convened weekly to be inspired by the Brahmo leader who spoke and acted like a Vaiṣṇava saint. "They would often be moved to tears and sobs and ejaculations," wrote Majumdar, "that were well nigh hysterical."[53] Keshub "had the whole town in ferment."[54] Then on June 7, as Sivanath Sastri later wrote with regret, "People prostrated themselves at the feet of Mr. Sen (and each other) and prayers were offered to him for intercession on behalf of sinners."[55] The incident was relayed from Bihar across India from east to west. Keshub's old friend, Satyendranath Tagore, now a successful government official in Ahmedabad, wrote that "I see that Keshub has been made an *avatāra*, but I doubt whether Keshub himself countenances the folly of his disciples."[56] Protap Chandra wrote: "Thus began a new apostolic organization. The abnormal excitement of emotions first began at Monghyr and understandably emasculated a good many unripe minds in Keshub's church."[57] The most interesting response was Bijoy Krishna's. Ironically it was Goswami who was determined to pull Keshub away from "superstition" back to rational Brahmo principles. He was angry with Keshub and those so-called Brahmos "who consider Keshub a savior."[58] In one local Bengali newspaper, he lashed out at people who tried to make Keshub "an incarnation of God."[59] Wrote Bijoy: "It is against the principles of the Brahmos to call Keshub Babu the Savior, to pray to him for salvation, to kiss his feet, and to compose sacred songs in his name. It is the duty of Brahmos to revere Keshub as a human being. Brahmoism recognizes only God as Savior. We request Keshub Babu to dissuade other Brahmos from this dangerous course."[60]

In order to heal the rift between himself and Bijoy, Keshub made certain that he did not appear as a divinely inspired prophet of the mass mind. Bijoy wanted Keshub to purify Vaiṣṇavism from such abuses through Brahmo rationalism; and certainly at this point in his life, he feared for the survival of rationalism if Brahmo leaders themselves succumbed to the temptation of becoming objects of mass hysteria. On June 4, 1869, approximately one year after Monghyr, Keshub wrote a piece on the prophet of Nadia in which he tried to vindicate himself from the charges of *avatarism* and man-worship. "The Brahmo Samaj," he said, "will forever be indebted to the spirit of Caitanya . . . his creed and character."[61] "But in four, short centuries," he went on to say, "we have witnessed the rise and decay of that . . . branch of Hinduism which is now in a degenerate condition."[62] What follows, in view of Goswami's influence, is highly significant: "The Vaiṣṇava church which had done wonders in its days will be renewed and reformed, and render valuable services to the course of Indian regeneration. While we sincerely regret that Caitanaya's spirit has so soon passed from the vast majority of his followers . . . we cannot but speak with the utmost reverence and gratitude of him who achieved some of the highest religious and social reforms on effete Hinduism and whose true-hearted disciples are an honor to Hindustan."[63]

Caitanya Among the World's Saints and Prophets: Keshub and the New Dispensation

In perspective, neo-Vaiṣṇavism proved simply an episode in Keshub Sen's quest for spiritual truth and an ideology of salvation. He was a restless intellectual continually itching with an uncontrollable impulse to embrace new ideas, to form new organizations. In Darjeeling, two years before his death, while already weakened by diabetes, he reminisced about his youth to his disciple Protap Chandra Majumdar: "To me, the state of being on fire is the state of salvation . . . It was death to me to awake from my slumber without the consciousness of being baptized anew in fire . . . From when I was young, I have always kept burning the fire of enthusiasm . . . and to keep up the condition of heat I have always run after what is new, always wished for new achievements, new ideas. What is new is warm, what is old is cold."[64]

In 1870, he went to England, met Queen Victoria, whom he admired, lectured to Unitarian and other liberal religious groups, was wined and dined everywhere, and enhanced his image as a Hindu religious reformer by means of a favourable press written by journalists greatly enamoured by his oratorical gift and mastery of the English tongue.[65] The experience made him an advocate of radical reform efforts among women, workers and peasants. From his return to Calcutta in 1870 to 1873, he worked tirelessly through an institution he created called the Indian Reform Association to raise the educational and moral standard of all three penalized groupings by means of schools, night classes and specially printed materials and newspapers.[66]

Then in the mid-seventies, he found himself, as Debendranath once had, despised by a new radical generation of Brahmos who suddenly found him authoritarian and hypocritical.[67] The real issue was female emancipation in church, college and the professional world.[68] Then, when Keshub married off his daughter at a tender age, against Brahmo principles, to the allegedly "idolatrous" king of Cooch Behar, the radicals exploded in defiance and in 1878 formed a new Brahmo Samaj.[69] About the same time, a weary and battered Keshub turned his back on Western-inspired social reform, interacted with the Neo-Śākta saint, Ramakrishna, and began his final quest to separate the essential from the non-essential in the major religions of the world.[70]

By 1981, when Keshub inaugurated his new world religion, or

New Dispensation, he had totally renounced his earlier sectarian concerns with a revitalized Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal. For years he had staged elaborate seminars on the founders of the world faiths, focusing on the diversified periods of crises each was confronted with.[71] The means by which a saint or prophet helped civilization overcome a breakdown and catastrophe was studied in preparation for the propagation of a new ideology of salvation for the modern world. Keshub spoke of a religion of science and saw himself as the Newton of that science.[72]

A study of the rites and rituals of the New Dispensation suggests, however, that Keshub had not entirely abandoned Caitanya and the Vaiṣṇava tradition. He still conducted processions through city streets, but alongside the customary Vaiṣṇava *khole*, *kartāl* and *ektārā*, were the Salvation Army trumpets and bugles.[73] Caitanya was still one of the saints celebrated for the reformation he inspired though he was now one of many protestors who appeared in history to oppose evil. Each saint had taught Keshub his own system or path of moral transformation. Sati Kumar Chatterji has succinctly listed these alternative paths: "Moses represented God's intervention in all of man's worldly concerns—both great and trivial. Socrates represented the paths to self-knowledge; Śākya Muni . . . self-denial; the yogīs . . . the power of rapt meditation; Jesus equated the love of man with the will of God; Mohummad . . . the brotherhood of man through rigid monotheism; Caitanya represented the path of rapturous devotion to God."[74]

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Tulasīdāsa: Rāmacaritamānasa and Bhakti

PRANABANANDA JASH

Tulasīdāsa[1] the saint-poet of Medieval India established his unsurmountable fame and popularity through his *magnum opus* composition of *Rāmacaritamānasa*[2] (henceforth *RM*) widely known as the *Tulasī Rāmayāṇa* which enshrines the highest ideals and enjoins the simplest practices of religious life. Tulasīdāsa in fact left no sphere of human life untouched. He has composed the story of Rāma in the form of an epic in which the life with all its aspects is portrayed in totality[3]. Simple exposition of serious and intricate moral issues supported by popular and picturesque descriptions and emotional overtones is primarily responsible for its wide appeal in all the sections of the Hindu society.

The *RM* was written by Tulasīdāsa more than four hundred years ago in Avadhi, the dialect of Hindi belonging to the region around Ayodhyā in Uttar Pradesh.[4] It is possible that due to the great importance of Ayodhyā in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the fact that the poet wrote at least a part of the *RM* in Ayodhyā and that he wrote in the dialect of the region, adds a particular relevance and appropriateness to his work. Although the poet chiefly inspired by the epic contents, he has definitely made a departure from Vālmīki and other poets who had narrated the story of Rāma's acts before him.[5]

Being an ardent follower of the Rāma cult,[6] he has depicted Rāma as an incarnation of God, the Almighty. Rāma's life right from his birth to his coronation and thereafter to the foundation of an ideal kingdom (*Rāma-rājya*) are vividly and eloquently described. The poet has metaphorically presented Rāma's life as *Mānasa*, i.e., as *Mānasa-Sarovara*, a mythological reservoir of water, on the four banks of which four batches of a speaker and a listener each have been set up to narrate various episodes of Rāma's life through their dialogues.[7] These four groups are:

(a) Yājñavalkya and Bharadvāja
(b) Śiva and Pārvatī

(c) Kākabhusuṇḍī and Garuḍa and

(d) Tulasī and an assembly of saints.

Tulasīdāsa in course of his description has presented various types of human beings, irrespective of any caste, colour or creed, age-groups, temperaments, etc., from the different strata of the society. He has given expression to almost all kinds of emotions, desires and thoughts which generate in human mind, and he has projected them mostly in their sublimated forms. The *RM*. is a great work of devotion and a guide to practical life. *Rāmacarita* as depicted by Tulasi, is:

Rāmacarita cintāmaṇi cāru/Santa Sumatitīya Subhaga simagāru//
Jagamaṅgala guṇagrama Rāmake/dānimukutidhana dharama dhāmake//[8]

The *RM* is essentially a work of *bhakti*, of loving devotion, and this we could call the spiritual personal, experimental or mystic aspect of the work. *Bhakti* is the 'geist' that permeates the entire work. It is the essential spiritual vision that Tulasīdāsa had, as he has indicated, experienced as a deep and powerful personal mystical experience. He has also experienced the deep compassion and love of God. It is the power of this vision and experience that is the coalescent force that holds together and harmonizes all the disparate elements of the *RM*.

Before entering into the concept of *bhakti* as revealed in the *RM*, it is rather prerequisite to have an idea about the genesis of *bhakti* and its later transformation at the time of Tulasīdāsa. Some scholars believed that the trace of *bhakti* can be found in the Vedic-Upaniṣadic ages,[9] but this view is not unchallenged.[10] However, the term *bhakti* possibly occurs for the first time in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*.[11] But it is to be noted that 'the idea of God of Grace,' the doctrine of *bhakti*, which form the salient features of Vaiṣnavism, are not very conspicuous in the Viṣṇu worship of the Vedas and the Brāhmaṇas, for Viṣṇu of the Brāhmaṇa is more closely associated with *yajña* than with *bhakti* or *prasāda*. Yet from the time of the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* onward *bhakti* became an indispensable term for using the sense of faith and devotion.[12] The *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini and the Buddhist works speak of this term in the sense of 'love directed to God'. By the time of the composition of the *Bhagavadgītā* (*c.* second century BC), it is established as a religious technical term. Nārada defines it as the nature of intense love for God. It is of the nature of the love (*preman*) which reaches its acme of perfection (*parama*). It is of the nature of *amṛta* (nectar of immortality).[13] Śāṇḍilya explains the term as 'absolute devotion to God' (*Sā parānuraktirīśvare*),[14] and Svapneśvara illustrates the devotion by describing it as a function of the mind with reference to the Supreme Being similar to what is evinced in regard to worldly objects under particular circumstances.[15] In later devotional literature a distinction is drawn between *bhakti* and *preman*. *Bhakti* is the spontaneous attachment for the desired object, God, being entirely possessed by and absorbed in Him. *Preman* is the most concentrated love for God which is full of the most intense attachment, and which purifies the heart completely. Divine love (*preman*) is the completion and perfection of devotion—*bhakti*.[16]

In order to create popular interest of the concept of *bhakti* the Purāṇas looked at the ideas of devotion (*bhakti*) with new dimension in addition to its earlier bearings. The Purāṇas introduce emotional joy, and ecstatic flavour into it. *Bhakti* is now loving, joyous and voluntary homage. The *jīva* by means of *bhakti* realises his intrinsic nature of partnership with God which is but kept in obscuration by *māyā* which represents the principle of illusion.[17] However, emotional *bhakti* charged with a feeling of intense love for a God who fulfilled the yearning of his devotees and reciprocated their love finds expression, at a later stage, in the hymns of the twelve Álvār saints of Tamil Nadu and still later in the school of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism founded by Śrī Caitanya.

In this connection we may just recall the concept of *bhakti* preached by Madhvācārya. While comparing the concept of *bhakti* propounded by Madhva, the upholder of Dvaitavāda doctrine, and the *bhakti* of Caitanya it is clear that both of them placed importance on *bhakti* as a path, but the forms of *bhakti* are different. Madhva followed the attitude of a servant toward the deity (*dāsya-bhāva*), while Caitanyadeva accepted all the five attitudes connected with *bhakti*, viz., *śānta*, *prita/dāsya*, *preya*, *vātsalya* and *madhura*, with special emphasis on the *madhura-bhāva*. Moreover, *bhakti*, according to Madhva, is a means for the attainment of salvation (*mukti*); while for Caitanya, it is an end in itself, the ultimate goal of life. It is thus interesting to note that the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas do not explain *bhakti* as devotion in a general sense only but make classification into *sādhanā*, *bhāva* and *prema* and each of these three are the representations of different stages of realisation.[18]

Tulasīdāsa's doctrine and ideas, his concept of *bhakti* are not drastically different from the traditional Hindu concept. F.R. Allchin puts it properly in the following words:

> Tulas dāsa repeatedly states that his doctrine derives from or is agreed by, the Vedas and Purāṇas. He further mentions the Upaniṣads, the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata. Of the sources of the *Rāmacaritamānasa* he tells us that they were "that which was agreed to by the Purāṇas, Nigamas and Āgamas, that which is reported in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and somewhat else besides". He often referes to Vālmīki as the prime source for the story of Rāma.[19]

In fact, the *RM* contains various forms of devotion or *bhakti*. For example: (i) Sugrīva and Vibhīṣaṇa are attracted primarily by the power of Rāma and love Him for that reason: (ii) Kauśalyā and Daśaratha, Bharata and Lakṣmana have a different relationship—they regard Rāma their own kith and kin; (iii) then there are devotees who are charmed by the beauty of Rāma and regard the child Rāma as the object of their devotion; but the most prominent among such devotees are Śiva and Kākabhuṣuṇḍī—they love the child Rāma. The distinctive feature of this form of devotion is that there is no desire in devotee; he; expects nothing from Rāma; he likes to enjoy his company, and nothing more. But the devotee of the warrior Rāma loves Him for His power.

There are several other points, as we see in course of analysis, showing the impact of Tulasīdāsa's predecessors in the field of *bhakti*. G.A. Grierson's observation in this connection is worthnoting:

> In Northern India Rāmananda had been its (*bhakti*) great exponent, and Tulasī-Dāsa put forward no novelty. His claim for consideration is that his teaching was successful. His own pure life and the magic of his poetry have done for the *bhakti-mārga* what the eloquence of hundreds of other teachers failed to do. The fact that he was a Smārta Vaiṣṇava must not be forgotten. He belonged to no sect, and founded no sect, but was just an ordinary Hindu, accepting all the Hindu mythological machi-

nery. While worshipping Rāma as the Supreme, he paid adoration to Śiva and the other gods.[20]

Tulasīdāsa like his spiritual predecessors like Rāmānanda, Madhva, Caitanya, etc., has enumerated not only different forms of *bhakti*, but also various levels of spirituality leading to *bhakti*. Rāma in course of his discourse to Śabarī speaks of the following nine kinds of devotion (*navadhā bhakti*)[21]:

1. *prathama bhagati santaham kara samga* (cultivation of the company of *sadhus*)[22];
2. *dusari ratimama kathā prasaṅga* (deep interest in the *līlā* of the Lord);
3. *guru pada paṅkaja sevā, tisari bhagati amāra* (service to the feet of the preceptor);
4. *couṭhi bhagati mama guṇa gāna, karai kapaṭa taji gāna* (singing the glory of the Lord spontaneously);
5. *mantra japa mama dṛḍha viśvāsā, pañcama bhajana soveda prakāśā* (repetition of Lord's name and firm faith in him);
6. *chaṭha dama sīla virati bahu karamā, nirata nirantara sajjana dharama* (practice of self-control fostering the spirit of renunciation and craving for virtuous life);
7. *sātara sama mohi maya joga dekhā, motem santa adhika kari lekhā* (to regard the whole world as permeated by God and to respect the saint even more than God);
8. *āṭhaba jathālābha santoṣa, sapanehum nahim dekhai paradoṣā* (contentment with whatever one gets and not finding fault with others); and finally;
9. *nabama sarala sava sana chalahīnā, mama bharosa hiyam haraṣa na dīnā* (dependence on the Lord, simplicity, freedom from all wile, no elation, and no depression).

God's grace can be achieved by following any one of these nine kinds of *bhakti*. In fact, *bhakti* is nothing but a gift from God, but if there is some initial inclination there are ways of developing it. Association with good company is essential to develop the sense of listening *Harikathā* (episodes of the Lord) which is prerequisite to get rid of illusion (*moha*) without which *Rāma-anurāga* will be inoperative.[23] So, these are different stages of means for developing *bhakti*. The primary importance is to make company with the sages, and that is possible only by the grace of god. Again, devotion which makes a distinction between the worshipper and the worshipped, is the means, and the goal is the peace of mind which can be achieved only through god's grace. Another direct form of the grace of the Lord is to be found in the evolution of *bhakti* which are of two stages—the first one is when the devoted *jīva* becomes dear to the Lord (*jagu japa Rāma, Rāma japa jehī*);[24] and when this happens the Lord begins to take direct interest in the *bhakta* (devotee), never leaving him merely to the operation of the law of *karma*. He begins to intervene directly and even sets aside the law of *karma* for the redemption of the devotee. This is how the *bhakta* is especially dear to him. There is no fear of fall when the Lord takes him up in his lap.

An in-depth analysis of the nature and character of the *bhakta* is to be found in the *RM*. A *bhakta* is depicted[25] as one whose ears are like the ocean to which the *līlās* of the Lord rush like rivers and whose eyes are always eager to see the Lord and who also likes to sing the glory of the Lord. The *bhakta* smells the fragrance of offerings to the Lord and eats only what has been offered to the Lord. He bows down to the *guru* and Brāhmaṇa in reverence, repeats the name of the Lord, worships Him along with his family members, performs sacrifice, feeds the Brāhmaṇas and gives them alms, serves the *guru* and regards him greater than the Lord, because *guru vina bhava nidhi tarai na koi.*[26] A Brāhmaṇa is to be worshipped even if he curses and is completely destitute of virtue:

Sāpata tāḍata paruṣa kahantā,
Vipra pūjya asa gābahin santā/
Pūjia vipra sīla guṇahīna,
Śūdra na guṇa gana gyāna pravīnā//[27]

He is free from lust, anger and greed, infatuation, pride and conceit, etc. He is dear to all and does good to all, regards pleasure and pain, praise and abuse alike. To the *bhaktas* all women are regarded as mothers, others' property as poison. He regards the Lord as his master, friend, father, mother and preceptor. He adopts virtues and rejects vices, suffers for the sake of the cow and the Brāhmaṇas and his mind has assimilated the principles of *dharma*. He gives up the pride of caste, social position, wealth, religion, family, etc., and cherishes the Lord in his heart. To a devotee heaven, hell and salvation are alike because he feels the existence of the Lord everywhere and he wants nothing from Him and he has genuine love for him. The devotee is a dedicated servant of the Lord and that includes service to all the devotees and also to all creatures of God. A spontaneous feeling of obedience and service to the Lord will always act in the mind of the devotee. He has complete humility and is free from all pride.

Another important means for emanating *bhakti* in the mind of a devotee and its subsequent growth is *nāma-japa*, i.e. repetition of name of the Lord. Like Śrīcaitanya, Tulasīdāsa also considers the *nāma-japa* as the best means of *bhakti*. The importance of *nāma-japa*, i.e. Rāma-*nama* according to Tulasī is stressed several times in the Bāla Kāṇḍa and Uttara Kāṇḍa of the *RM*. In the Āraṇya Kāṇḍa[28] it is stated that although the Lord has several names, but none is as great as Rāma-*nāma*. In order to establish his proposition pertaining to the *nāma-māhātmya*, Tulasīdāsa argues that the name and named are one,[29] and further it is the name which makes the name intelligible and is, therefore, even superior to *rūpa* (form).[30] The name is even superior to Rāma.[31] It is the mediator between the abstract Absolute and the Personified Absolute.[32] Through *nāma-japa* Hanumāna was able to have a control over Rāma.[33] In the *Kaliyuga* as mentioned time and again in the *RM*, *nāma-japa* is most effective (*Rāma-nāma avalambana ekū*)[34]. The name of Rāma is effective whether it is uttered with love or with spite, in anger or even in moments of boredom and laziness.[35] In order to develop the feelings of *bhakti*, the practice of *nāma-japa* is indispensable and its impact for the enhancement of *bhakti-bhāva* in the heart of the devotee is so vast and multi-dimensional that even Rāma is not able to describe it properly and fully (*Rāma na sakahiñ nāma guṇa gāī*).[36]

Tulasīdāsa is very categorical in pointing out the various stages which one has to pass through before arriving at the level of *bhakti*. He explains that out of thousands, only one leads his life according to *dharma*, just one develops the spirit of renunciation; out of millions who have attained the state of renunciation, just one is able to attain real knowledge; and out of millions of *jñānīs* just one becomes a *vijñānī*. But a *bhakta* who is exclusively devoted to the Lord is even rarer than the *vijñānī*.[37] Tulasīdāsa did not attach much importance to knowledge because it is "difficult to express, difficult to understand and difficult to practice rationally".

He has described he complexity of knowledge and simplicity of devotion in such a manner that there is no need to add anything further to it. His *bhakti* is not at all dependent on anything, not even *jñāna:*

so suṭantra avalamba na ānā/
tehi adhina gyāna vigyānā/[38]

It emanates from the heart when it is free from all attachments.[39] So, the first condition for *bhakti*, according to Tulasīdāsa, is turning one's mind away from the world. And the subsequent qualification is the feeling of utter dependence on god:

Mora dāsa kahāi nara āsā/
Karai to kahahu kāha visvāsā/[40]

As soon as different forms of *bhakti* get rooted in his heart, the devotee develops love for the saints and regards the Lord as Supreme one, sings His glories and becomes free from lust, anger, etc.

The *bhakta* having achieved *bhakti* in its supreme form leaves everything to God, does not ask for anything, and accepts only that which the Lord considers best for him. It is stated that when the Lord is pleased to appear before the devotee. He offers to grant him whatever he wants and does not impose His will on him. It is because the Lord wants that the devotee should first be free from all desires and then be granted *bhakti.* This is nicely illustrated in an anecdote of Kākabhuṣuṇḍī. It is depicted that the Lord having appeared before Kākabhuṣuṇḍī, offered all supernatural powers, knowledge, reason, special enlightenment—everything except *bhakti*;[41] but the Kāka prayed only for pure and deep-rooted devotion.[42] The Lord granted him pure *bhakti* and complimented with these words:

Sava sukha khani bhagati taim māgī,
Nahim jaga kou tohi sama varabhāgi/
Jo muni koti jatana nahim lahahī,
Je japa joga anala tana dahahīm//
Rījheun dekhi tori caturai,
Māgehu bhagati mohi ati bhāī/

Sunu Vihamga prasāda ava moren,
Subha guṇa vasihahim ura toren//[43]

Tulasīdāsa although well versed in philosophy, is not a philosopher in essence. R.G. Bhandarkar informs us that his path of devotion centred round Rāma, is "based upon a dualistic philosophy with a leaning towards spiritual monism of Advaita system."[44] In this context it is not irrelevant to mention that the supreme place in the *RM* is given to Rāma. Though he is described as an incarnation of Viṣṇu, he is greater than Viṣṇu. He is omniscient and omnipresent. He is a power supreme who can make, Viṣṇu, Brahmā and Śiva dance.[45] He is a manifestation of the Absolute *brahman.* Rāma assumes the human form 'in order to destroy the evil and protect the good'. All are born out of Rāma and are ultimately absorbed in him. Thus everything springs from the Supreme Being and then goes back to him. This absorption or complete merger is salvation. The devotee does not, however, crave for salvation because for devotion quality is essential.[46] 'The devotees of the personalised god do not long for salvation'. Anyway it is to be remembered that he composed the *RM* not to propound a system of philosophy, but to propagate the efficacy of devotion to Rāma, his unflinching faith in the Supreme Being. He deliberately laid emphasis on *bhakti* (devotion) than on *jñāna* (knowledge) because it was the need of his times—of the social environment. It is needless to point out that the principle of devotion has its roots in philosophy but it has its social bearings too.

The social aspect of devotion becomes clear with the help of its two main ideas: (a) all devotees are equal in the eyes of God and (b) reverence to both Śiva and Viṣṇu, i.e. tolerance for other's worshipping objects. According to Tulasīdāsa, Rāma accepts only the relationship of devotion—"He admits the bonds of devotion only". Even a high birth without devotion is as futile as a cloud without vapours.[47] It is thus said: "None will question your caste or creed, you devote yourself to God and you belong to Him." This concept of devotion is no doubt an echo of the preachings of earlier saints of medieval India; and this is helpful to level up the differences in the contemporary social set-up. In the second idea, the Vaiṣṇava cult of devotion considers it unpardonable to have ill feelings against any god or goddesses. Aspersion to other's deity is an heinous act. Tulasīdāsa himself shows reverence to both Śiva and

Rāma. He emphatically points out that service to Śiva will beget perpetual devotion to Rāma.

In fact, these two principles of the Devotional Cult served a great purpose in the society. The idea of equality of all the devotees irrespective of any caste, colour and creed reduced the social differences and tension. Similarly, the propagation of tolerance towards all religions helped in broadening the religious outlook and strengthening social cohesion. As we have mentioned earlier, Tulasīdāsa being a staunch follower of Rāma emphasised the worship of Śiva. Rāma himself professed that without the worship of Śiva, one cannot cultivate his *bhakti.*[48] The poet makes no distinction between these two deities. They are one and the same but with different forms.[49] In the realm of religion Tulasīdāsa has referred to the hierarchy of gods and goddesses and made a special effort to effect a compromise between the cults of Śiva and Viṣṇu. Rāma, time and again, says that he does not like the critics of Śiva.

> If Śiva's critic is called a follower of mine
> To me he does not appeal even in dream.

It is argued by some scholars that this religious compromise was motivated by political considerations for maintaining an amicable relationship between the Śaivas and the Vaiṣṇavas, the two most prominent sects of the then times. But, in reality, this attempt at harmony bears no political overtone in its nature, especially when we think of the liberality and catholicity of the Vaiṣṇava cult within its doctrine and tenets.

Another important point is also to be considered in this connection. The devotional movement during this medieval period is possibly regenerated due to social and cultural necessity of the time. By placing more importance and emphasis on devotion rather than on knowledge, the saints endevoured to re-establish those social values which had been shaken at their very roots because of the extremist views of certain philosophical systems, especially monism, according to which, differences and distinctions of the society and of the world are unreal and insignificant. So there is no question of good and bad, heaven and hell, torture and tortured, etc. Such monism could be the goal of individual aspiration, but it is difficult to follow it as a general norm of a society. The good must be appreciated and rewarded, while the evil should be punished, even if they are considered equal spiritually, Tulasīdāsa's concept of devotion is in no way connected with the intricacies of *yoga*, *yañja*, *japa*, *tapa* or *upavāsa*,[50] but laid stress on simple, easy and pure conduct and this indirectly helped in the elevation of social standards, and also made a positive attempt to the cause for the liquidation of social chaos and indiscipline.

It is no wonder to assume that much of these social ideology of the movement have been borrowed from the teachings of Śrī Caitanya of Bengal (1486-1533) who revitalised Vaiṣṇavism with the social dimension of the devotional movement. And he was very much successful in preaching his ideas in different parts of India. Caitanyadeva along with his associates served the popular aspirations of the people by simplifying religion and opening its portals to all. With the aid of their religious movement they also ventured to reform society at all levels. Caitanya professed his faith only in the religion of love and devotion. But the movement proved to be much more than a simple *bhakti* upsurge. It took the shape of a mass-movement which had a character of its own. The nature of the movement was not confined within the religious purview alone, but it is extended in the field of socio-religion too. Caitanya urged upon people to concentrate on one and only God, Kṛṣṇa, and cultivate Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* through recitation of the 'Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*'. With this simple method alongwith certain observances of Vaiṣṇava rituals for religious pursuit, the common man could thus be emancipated from all sorts of elaborate Brahmanical costly ceremonies and sacrifices, caste prejudices and taboos, law books and priests. Caitanya, like Tulasīdāsa, never kept himself aloof from community and the main streams of everyday life. He was keenly aware of the problems of man, temporal as well as spiritual.[51] True to this goal, Caitanya and his associates rejected some of the orthodox values and tried to unite people of all sections of the society within the fold of a popular religion. They recognised the dignity of all individuals. In these respects there is a striking similarity among the poets and saints of the contemporary movements initiated by Kabir, Nanak, Caitanya and Tulasīdāsa.

Yet, in spite of all this, Tulasīdāsa's faith in Rāma uplifts him and enables him to present a very noble conception of God. His tender love for the humblest as well as the greatest of his devotees, his condescension in becoming incarnate for their sakes, his sympathy and endurance of suffering for those who are devoted to him, and his readiness to forgive are expressed with great dignity and power.[52]

Tulasīdāsa thus emerges as a man of composite vision who endeavoured to resolve the often contradictory ideas prevalent in his time, rising above narrow dogmas and sectarian belief. He, like other saint-poets of medieval India accepts tradition, but he also makes his own contribution adding a new flavour and a new colour to all that he inherits from his predecessors. In fact, the moral dicta presented in an artistic form still reverberate in the life and thought of the Indians, not only in the Hindi-speaking region but far beyond it, even beyond the territories of Indian subcontinent.

REFERENCES

[1] G.A. Grierson, in the *Indian Antiquary*, 1893, p. 264, holds that "the poet was born in 1589 of the Vikrama era "(i.e. 1532) in the town of Rajapur, Banda district, U.P. (*Gazetteer of Banda*, 1931 VS and 1966 VS). He was a Brahmin by birth. He spent a long life of about 91 years that means he expired in AD 1623.

[2] Tulasīdāsa, popularly known as Goswamī (*Gosain*) left an indelible mark in the field of literature, both religious and secular, projecting the contemporary philosophical, religious, social, political, cultural and literary condition. Still it is a matter of great controversy about the exact number of compositions Tulasīdāsa had written. The Nagarī Pracārinī Sabhā of Varanasi in its research reports has ascribed as many as thirty-seven books to the poet, but this is not unchallenged. The following titles are generally accepted as the works of the saint-poet."

Vairāgya Sandipanī, *Rāma lalā Nahchhū*, *Jānakī Maṅgala*, *Rāmajñāpraśna*, *Rāmacaritamānasa*, *Pārvatī Maṅgala*, *Gītāvalī*, *Kṛṣṇa-Gītāvalī*, *Vinaya Patrikā*, *Baravae Rāmōyaṇa*, *Bahuka*, *Dohāvalī* and *Kavitāvalī*.

[3] R.K. Verma, *Hindi Sāhitya Kā Ālochanātmaka Itihāsa*, p. 470.

[4] He started to compose this work in Ayodhya in VS 1631, AD 1574-75 and completed it in Varanasi after four-five years later (*Gazetteer of Banda*, VS 1931 and VS 1966.

[5] In this connection mention may be made an earlier vernacular *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Rāmāyaṇa Kathā* of Viṣṇudāsa (ed. Bhagirat Misra), written in western Hindi dialect in Bundelkhand in AD 1442. Possibly due to its locale and dialect, it failed to secure even a fraction of the popularity of the *RM*. But it is also wrong to attribute the reason of failure entirely due to the location or the dialect of the work since other vernacular *Rāmāyaṇa* in Bengali and Tamil were very successful and popular.

[6] About his preceptor not much is known. We can only say that he was a de-

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votee of Rāma and used to recite his story to devout listeners. His *guru* was a well-versed scholar and well-informed man who directed Tulasīdāsa on to the path of devotion to Rāma. Hazari Prasad Dwivedi writes: "He was fortunate enough to find a *guru* in Naraharidāsa, a disciple of Rāmānanda who initiated him to Rāma-*mantra* and made him acquainted with the fascinating story of Rāma, his *iṣṭadeva*." (*Cultural Heritage of India*, vol. V, pp. 494-95). In this connection the following Dohā of Tulasīdāsa is well-remember:

Eka bharoso eka bala eka āsa visvāsa |
Eka Rāma Ghana Syāma hita cataka-Tulasīdāsa ||
Rāmacarita mānasa O Dohāvalī, ed. J. Chaki, vol. I, p. 345.

[7] Bala Kāṇḍa, vol. I, p. 39 (Here and further references are from the Bengali edition of *Rāmacaritamānasa* (edited and translated by Jyotibhushan Chaki in three volumes, Calcutta, 1978-1980).

[8] Ibid., p. 34.

[9] A.B. Keith, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1915, p. 834.

[10] J.N. Banerjea, *Development of Hindu Iconography*, pp. 73-74.

[11] *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, VI.23.

[12] Pranabananda Jash, *History and Evolution of Vaiṣṇavism in Eastern India*, pp. 203-4.

[13] *Nārada Sūtra*, 3; R.L. Mitra, *Antiquities of Orissa*, I, p. 245.

[14] *Śāṇḍilya Sūtram*, I.1.2.

[15] Svapenśvara on *Śāṇḍilya sūtram*; R.L. Mitra, op. cit., p. 242.

[16] *Cultural Heritage of India*, vol. IV, pp. 148-49.

[17] The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (II.24.50) states that if the persons to whom God shows his grace shake off all hypocrisy and take refuge in him with all their hearts, they transcend his *māyā*, and are purged of egoism. In the *Bhagavadgītā* (VII. 14) we find a similar expression: "They alone can cross it (*māyā*) who take refuge in Me."

[18] For further explanation on these nomenclature, see author's paper "Role of Bhakti on Caitanyaism" presented in a seminar on the 500th birth anniversary of Sri Caitanya, 8-10 February, 1986, Viśabhārati, pp. 4ff.

[19] F.R. Allchin, "The place of Tulasīdāsa in North Indian Devotional Tradition", *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, October, 1966, p. 124.

[20] G.A. Grierson in the *Encyclepaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed., J. Hastings, vol. 12, 1974, p. 472; also, *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, 1903. *Tulasī Dāsa—Poet and Religious Reformer*, pp. 447ff.

[21] Araṇya Kāṇḍa, vol. 2, pp. 320ff.

[22] Elsewhere (Uttara Kāṇḍa, vol. 3, p. 280) it is stated that *bhakti* is the mine of happiness, it can be achieved only with the cultivation of good company; and this is possible only with the performance of good deeds. Association with the *sādhus* is an important means for releasing worldly attachment:

Bhakti sutantra sakala sukha khāni,
Vinu satasaṃga na pābahin prani |
Punya Puñja vinu milahi na santā,
Sata samgati saṃsrti kura antā ||

[23] Uttara Kāṇḍa, vol. 3, p. 294.

Vine Satsaṃga na Harikathā,

Tehi vinu moha na bāga |
Moha gaeñ vinu Rāmapada,
Hoi na dṛḍha anurāga ||

[24] Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa, vol. 2, p. 182.

[25] Ibid., pp. 107-10.

[26] Uttara Kāṇḍa, vol. 3, p. 324.

[27] Araṇya Kāṇḍa, vol. 2, p. 319; cf. also pp. 294; cf. also Uttara Kāṇḍa, vol. 3, pp. 342-43.

[28] Ibid., p. 328.

Jadyapi prabhuke nāma anekā,
Śrutikaha adhika eka ten ekā |
Rāma sakala nāmahṇate adhikā,
Hou nātha agha khaga gana vadhika ||

[29] Bāla Kāṇḍa, vol. I, p. 24.

Samujhata sarisa nāma aru nāṃī,
Priti paraspara prabhu anugāmī |
Nāma rūpa dūi īsa upādhī,
Akataā anādi susāmujhi sādhī ||

[30] Ibid., pp. 24-25.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid., p. 30: *Nāma Sumati Samaratha Hanumānū.*

[34] Ibid , p. 30. In several other places we find similar expression:

Nāma Kāmataru kāla karāla,
Sumibata samana sakala jaga jālā |
Rāma nāma Kali abhimata dātā,
Hita paraloka loka pitumāta ||

(Bāla Kāṇḍa, vol. I, p. 29)

In fact, Tulāsīdāsa devoted some verses separately narrating the advantage in the *Kaliyuga* (Uttara Kāṇḍa, pp. 334ff). Elsewhere he also refers to:

Ekhin Kalikāla na sādhana dūjā,
Joga jagya japa tapa vrata pūjā |
Rāmahi sumiria gāia ramahi,
Santata sunia Rāma guṇa gramahi ||

(Uttara Kāṇḍa, vol. 3, p. 372; cf. also pp. 320 ff)

Again,

Rāma nāma narakesarī,
Kaṇaka kasipu kalikāla |
Jāpaka jana Prahlāda Jimī,
Pālihi dali surasāla || (Bāla Kāṇḍa, vol. I, p. 30)

[35] Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa, vol. 2, p. 259. It is stated elsewhere (p. 181) that:

Vāraka Rāma nāma Kahata jaga jeu |
Hota tarana tānananara teu ||

[36] Bāla Kāṇḍa, vol. 1, p. 29.

[37] Uttara Kāṇḍa, vol. 3, pp. 317-18.

[38] Arnya Kāṇḍa, vol. 2, p. 293. There is no difference between *jñāna* and *bhakti* (*Bhagatihi gyānahi nahiṃ kachu bheda*), differences lies in their execution

and attribution, see Uttara Kāṇḍa, vol. 3, pp. 353ff.

[39] *Sabakai mamatā tāga batorī,*
Mama pada manahin bāndhi bari dorī | (Araṇya Kāṇḍa)

[40] Ibid.

[41] Uttara Kāṇḍa, vol. 3, p. 315.

[42] Ibid., p. 316.

[43] Ibid.

[44] *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious Systems*, pp. 74-75.

[45] Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa, vol. 2, p. 105.

[46] Ibid., pp. 78, 106.

[47] Araṇya Kāṇḍa, vol. 2, p. 320.
Jati pāṃtikula dharma vaḍāī,
Dhana bala parijana guṇa caturāī |
Bhagati hīna nara sohai kaisā,
Vinu jala vārida dekhia jaisā ||

[48] Uttara Kāṇḍa, vol. 3, p. 281.
Śaṅkara bhajana vinā nara,
Bhagati na pābai mori |

Rāma himself worships Śiva: *Pūji purāri śadhu sanamāne* (Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa, vol. 2, p. 188 cf. also pp. 87, 89).

[49] Pranabananda Jash, *History of Saivism*, chap. 9, pp. 134ff. This composite form of the deity is known as Harihara. Tulasīdāsa is well aware about this syncretistic form as he frequently speaks of Harihara (Bāla Kāṇḍa, vol. I, pp. 6, 13, 29; Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa, vol. 2, pp. 141, 260, 266).

[50] Uttara Kāṇḍa, vol. 3, p. 281.
Kahahu bhagati patha kabana prayāsā,
Joga na makha japa tapa upabāsā |
Sarala subhāba na mana kuṭilāī,
Jathā lābha santoṣa sadāī ||

It is stated elsewhere (pp. 326-28) in the same *kāṇḍa* that these are means for Rāma-*anurāga* without which no one can achieve peace:

[51] It is stated in the *Caitanya caritāmṛita* (Ādi, chap. 9) of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja that on one occasion Caitanyadeva exclaimed to Nityānanda: "Blessed is my life for I am born in the holy land of 'Bharat'. Do good to others and blessed be yourself."
Bharat bhūmite haila manuṣya janma sār |
Janma sārthak kari kara para upakār ||

[52] J.N. Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, p. 330.

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